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87

RPGA® NETWORK

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The New Rogues Gallery

Plump, A Winning AD&D® Game Character

by Scott Douglas

The Network's club contest to create memorable PCs yielded a stack of terrific characters for the AD&D® setting. Here is the winning entry from the Players' Guild of Central Oklahoma.

Plump

5th Level Male Human Bard

STR 12
INT 14
WIS 10
DEX 17
CON 15
CHR 15

AC Normal: 2
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 27
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
Languages: Common, Elvish, Halfling, Sprite
THACO: 18

Age: 35
Height: 5′ 8″
Weight: 220 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Lasso, short sword, dagger
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Singing (15), lute (16) flute (16), cooking (14), dancing (17), set snares (13), rope use (17), swimming (11), reading/writing Common (15)
Magic Items: *Dorus's lyre**, *Studded Leather +2, Short sword +1*
* New magic item described at the end of this entry.

Spells/day: 3/1
Equipment: 10 candied apples, three 30′ lassos, two daggers, five pounds of rice, two pounds of onions, two pounds of lard, one pound of salt, soft waterproof boots, leather breeches, two changes of underclothing, leather gloves, silver flute, quill and ink, diary, 100′ of twine, bedroll, two waterskins, two wineskins, 10 handkerchiefs, two small sacks, two candles, flint and steel, three bars of soap, backpack

Bard Abilities

CW	DN	PP	RL
10	40	15	25

Spell books: Level One: *Charm person, phantasmal force, sleep, unseen servant, burning hands, jump, mending;* Level 2: *Forget, knock, levitate, whispering wind*

Spells usually carried: *Charm person, phantasmal force, unseen servant, forget*

Plump is a not-so-tall, very round man who always wears doeskin breeches, matching boots, and a colorful blue and green tabard over his custom-designed leather armor. He is fastidiously clean, though he sweats profusely in the heat.

His voice is loud, clear, and melodious, and he rather likes the sound of it.

Plump carries an old lute, dusty and worn from years of constant use, and a beautiful lyre. He occasionally waxes the instruments to keep the wood supple and the sound true.

Born in a small village, the 4th son of a local tavernmaster and his wife, Plump grew up working in the kitchens. He cooked and cleaned, scrubbed and served. As a result, he developed refined manners while watching the courtly ways of the nobler guests.

Most of all, Plump loved to listen to the occasional minstrel who played in his father's establishment. Eventually, the young human convinced one of the entertainers to teach him to play and sing—and Plump's latent talent for music soon became apparent to everyone.

The more Plump played and sang, the more he resolved to run away from home and make his fortune on the road as a musician.

One day, at the age of 17, he made his resolution a reality and startled his parents by suddenly saying farewell—after wrapping up three loaves of fresh bread and some clean clothes in a bedroll. Since that time, Plump has led a more exciting life, the gypsy life of the traveling bard.

Plump is friendly and courteous (it doesn't pay to make prospective audiences angry). But he is somewhat self-centered.

He prefers negotiation to combat, but if aroused to violence, he fights dirty.

He likes his meals large and simple, and prefers his women the same way. Perhaps to rebel against his close family upbringing, he seldom adventures with the same person twice, and he rarely calls someone a friend. However, one such rare friend is Phester, with whom he often goes hunting. Another is Harry, who brews the best mead west of the mountains.

"You're darn right my stomach is cramping," Plump is often heard to say. "I haven't had a decent meal in I don't know how long! And the food on that table should just about sate my appetite. Lucky I bought those candied apples yesterday. They will make the perfect dessert. Tomorrow, though, I think that I shall begin to diet.

"Mealtimes have been tough since I came to this forsaken city. When I was in the forest, all I had to do was play the lyre and charm up a fat little boar...or a tender deer...or a succulent rabbit. Sure, they always gave me that hurt look, when I bopped 'em and slit their tender little throats, but supper is supper, after all.

"Geeze, it's hot in here. And here I am without my talcum. I suppose I'll just have to chafe a little bit."

Dorus's lyre: Only a dozen of these finely-crafted ebonwood instruments are rumored to exist. Carved images of forest creatures cover the instrument.

Created by the famed bard, Dorus of Griswold Barrens, Dorus's lyre can be used by anyone with a nonweapon proficiency in stringed instruments. The lyre produces sweet tones and never needs tuning. It is virtually indestructible, having an effective Armor Class of −4.

In the hands of a bard, the strings glow a pale blue and its magic is realized. A bard of any level can call upon its ability to *speak with animals* or to cast *animal friendship*. Both spells can be used three times a day.
XP Value: 5,000
GP Value: 20,000

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The Newszine's own Larry Smith offers this candid view of the action in this issue's adventure, *Eye of the Leviathan*.

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Notes From HQ

A Short Walk Through Today's Network

As you read this, my HQ colleagues and I are beginning to tally the results of issue #85's contest to find a new name for the Network and for the Newszine. Things already are looking a little different, however. Starting with this issue, every Newszine goes into an envelope before mailing—no more mangled issues.

Perhaps you've also noticed that a familiar Newszine element has departed—the mailing cover. The envelope has made this four-page outer wrapper unnecessary. From now on, forms, classifieds, and convention announcements will appear inside the Newszine.

The Network has been evolving ever since it first began in 1980, but changes are going to start occurring much more rapidly during the next few months. I'll bet there are some changes *you'd* like to see. There never has been a better time to ask HQ for new things, so drop us a postcard or letter and tell us what you'd like the Network to do for you.

Only Temporary

The Newszine's production schedule accelerates every summer to allow the HQ staff the extra time it needs to handle a myriad of seasonal tasks. As a consequence, this issue has neither *Letters* nor *Classified Ads*. Don't despair. The ads will be back next month. Letters depend on you, the members—pay special attention to my call for suggestions on new things the Network can do.

Tournament Judges

Every year, the aggravation level here at HQ builds to a nail-biting crescendo about mid-summer as we struggle to schedule judges for the GEN CON® *Game Fair and for Origins*. During the past two years, there has been a growing "give me more!" sentiment among Network members when it comes to running tournaments.

Sometimes, this is a good thing. Many long-time members have discovered that judging is fun. For these people, their own physical endurance is the only limit on how many slots they'll judge at a convention. These people are a godsend. Of course, they ease the logistical burden by filling up vacant judge slots and allow us to sleep at night, but they're a blessing in another way: They're among the best judges the Network has. I don't just mean that these people have the best judge rankings (they do, for obvious reasons). I mean they consistently get better scores than people who judge less. And you shouldn't think these people run the same scenario over and over until they finally get it right. Most of these people try to avoid running the same thing more than three times at one convention—if they do more than that they start getting bored and their judge scores suffer—and their players don't enjoy themselves so much. These marathon referees get lots of practice, but they do well because they *enjoy* judging for its own sake.

Unfortunately, the "give me more" attitude also has a negative incarnation. People who think this way are holding their hands out—palm up—when they volunteer to be event judges. Their first and foremost thoughts are about what's in it for them. Many of these judges are the type who act surly when their event coordinators give them instructions and who conduct their game sessions as though they are hall proctors at a high school detention session—every experienced tournament player knows the type I'm talking about.

Some are nice people who just think they're getting a bad deal; the way they see it, the Network is giving out bigger and bigger prizes to players and not following up with equally large prizes for judges. Let me assure everyone who feels this way that HQ has read your letters and that we recall our conversations with you. However, the *Letters* column in issue #71 spelled out exactly why HQ doesn't give formal judge prizes (though some individual conventions do). As far as compensation, that varies with the convention. At this past GEN CON® Game Fair, HQ gave judges one $5 gift certificate for every round run, a shot at joining the 180 club, and a few extras which were presented at the Sunday awards ceremony.

More importantly, each judge got some hidden benefits. You can't hold them in your hand, but some members (the ones who judge a lot and love it) understand and appreciate them. They got the satisfaction of knowing they ran their events well. They got seats at Network events without buying tickets. And they enjoyed the limelight in every Network event they ran—who but a judge can get away with talking for half the playing time or more? Here at HQ, we've come to believe that's enough compensation.

The tournament program can't grow any more without more tournament judges. However, the Network isn't going to "buy" judges—volunteers do a better job. This means that more people who only play in events right now *must* step forward to judge or the Network as a whole will step backward. It's up to you.

GEnie

The arrival of a modem for my office PC has produced a change in my work schedule. At least two times a week, I'm using GEnie to have a direct dialog with members. It's a lot like living in a cozy little town populated only by Network members. To enjoy GEnie's many benefits you need a personal computer equipped with a modem. GEnie's fees are modest, $8.95 a month and 5-22 cents a minute depending when you're signed on (your first four hours each month are free). Currently, members can post messages on a variety of bulletin boards read by me, several of my colleagues at TSR, Inc., several club presidents, and MAC member Carl Buehler. This is the fastest way to get information about the Network. There's also a monthly listing of upcoming Network tournaments and their featured scenarios. You also can send "mail" directly to the Network staff and get a reply within 2-5 days. To subscribe to GEnie, call Client Services at (800)368-9636.

Good Gaming,

Skip

The Third Degree

Lost Souls, The Case Of The Ghost Inspector

from the gaming casebook of Inspector Jeff Cisneros

It all started in Mercer's. It had been a rough week, and I was concentrating on a case of rye when this beautiful ghost girl appeared on the stool next to me. She had gams that would make a guy want to take up dancing lessons.

"I have something for you to read," she said.

"Business or pleasure, sweetheart?" I returned.

"Business," she replied.

Before I could say another word she popped out of existence, leaving me ogling an empty space. Shaking my head, I turned back to my drink and found a book by my glass—it was titled Lost Souls.

Lost Souls

There have been numerous attempts in the past to market a successful role playing game addressing death or the afterlife. Most were not terribly successful, so I was not very optimistic.

Lost Souls takes your character into the afterlife—after an untimely demise. Your character is first confronted by a teacher, a "Mentor," who tells the character the error of his ways and informs him that to ascend to a higher state of being he must "do better."

Doing better means gathering "positive karma" until the character has enough to ascend to that higher state. However, there are things in the way: acquiring negative karma, evil beings, and unfinished business from "life."

Rule Book

This is a standard-sized game manual with some interesting cover artwork by Rob Alexander. It is not spectacular, but it raises enough curiosity to get you to open the cover and read. There are two sections to this manual, a nine-chapter player section and a four-chapter referee section, both well organized. I was impressed with the introduction, which was informative without being juvenile.

Player's Section

The game's mechanics begin in Chapter two: Character Creation, which outlines the process of developing a character. You first determine your character's appearance during life. You can either create this yourself or follow a set of charts.

You can choose a profession from the third chapter, or just roll on the chart. There is a minimum of page-hopping, and total character creation time is about 35 to 45 minutes.

Chapter four rounds out the creation process with the type of Lost Soul the character is.

The game lists a wide variety of skills characters have, and the ghost powers available. One chapter explains combat, and another describes the character class Medium; they are different from other game characters just because they are alive.

The Medium is the only means through which a lost soul can accurately communicate with the living. A person reluctant to enter the game already "dead" could play a Medium.

Judge's Section

This section is dedicated to explaining the game world and general framework of the afterlife. One chapter gives a general description of the afterworld. While useful by itself, it leaves room for the judge to expand, clarify, and create a setting unique to his or her campaign world.

Other chapters give useful suggestions for creating your own world, adventures, and campaigns. There are also sample adventures to help you begin.

Final Judgment

I am quite pleased with this game. Although it may not be to everyone's taste, it maintains high standards that shouldn't offend anyone's religious or moral sensibilities. Stories of the afterworld have fascinated mankind for centuries, and this version has a balanced view of what is "good" versus what is "evil." The characters are understandable, and there are no pretensions about the nature of their missions. I find the mechanics to be sound, uncomplicated and a great deal of fun. I commend the designers for creating a fine product, well worth a gamer's money.

Game Title: Lost Souls, Horror and Afterlife RPG
Publisher: Sage Lore Productions, Inc.
Price: $19.95
Designers: Joe and Kathleen Williams
Product Information: Sage Lore Productions, Inc.
PO Box 14616
Portland, Oregon 97214
Please Send SASE

I would like to hear what you think about this column, and I accept suggestions for systems and supplements to review. Write to me in care of the Newszine. ❑

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A Little Something On The Side

Extracurricular Events For Your Role Playing Gang

by Roger E. Moore

As if getting together for role playing games wasn't enough, gamers invariably come up with ideas for "extracurricular" activities, like going to movies and cooking out, that seem only marginally related to gaming.

Or are they?

Shared activities among gamers often serve three purposes, two apparent and one not. Obviously, going to see a movie with all your gaming friends is a fun activity, and everyone loves fun. Also, the movie might provide material for the role playing campaign in which everyone is involved. Nearly every gaming group I've been with was prone to run off to see a film or catch a museum exhibit that related to our games.

Less obviously, shared activities also bond the participants closer together as a group. The better bonded the gaming group, the better the members will role play together. Fewer conflicts arise among gamers who often associate away from the gaming table, and I would venture to say that eating together is an especially good bond-maker; it's as basic and primal a shared ritual as you can find in human history.

Let's take a look at some "extracurricular activities" that you and your fellow gamers can take part in. Do them for the fun and the learning involved; the bonding will take care of itself. Show this article to your friends and see if something happens!

Party, Party, Party!

In the gaming group I was with at Ft. Bragg, NC, two of the player characters planned to get married, and we set aside an evening to celebrate. We had about 10 gamers in all, most of them military personnel from the base, and we organized a potluck supper with a cake and a special adventure to be run after the party. We had the wedding first, during which we had to role play our characters, then had the toast and the dinner party. We ate until we felt (if not looked) like walking zeppelins, then we had our characters charge fearlessly down into the worst dungeon we could find, where we killed lots of monsters and escaped with (incredibly) all of the party intact and lots of loot. It was a great evening.

Give a party the next time a character in your group decides he or she has something to celebrate. Do it if there's a birthday or special anniversary for someone in the group. What the heck—do it even if no one has a reason to celebrate, making something up ("Hey, it's St. Cuthbert's birthday Saturday!"). Set up a potluck lunch or dinner. Get everyone to go on a picnic in a backyard or at a local park, and bring something for the grill. Play some volleyball, or just sit around and socialize (as if you didn't do enough of it already during a game). Laugh, play Frisbee, go for a hike, enjoy the outdoors and get silly for a while. (If you must, you could even start a role playing or board game, but why push it?)

Setting up a party like this is an especially good way to introduce new members to your gaming group, as it helps them fit in more quickly and easily. Everyone gets to meet and talk to the new player—a much nicer introduction than "starting cold" with the person showing up at a game unannounced. Besides, it's also a nice chance to talk about life in the real world, and lots of interesting things can come out of that, too (some people start dating after they meet each other in gaming sessions).

Into The Boob Tube

Does your group get together to watch *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, or *Doctor Who* on cable every week? Does someone sometimes record special TV programs on videotape and pass them around to other group members to watch? Does your group have a "bad movie night" or a "science fiction film festival" once a month, at the home of someone with a VCR and a pile of videos? Well, why not?

Television has been roundly cursed for making us into a nation of pablum-heads, but once in a while we all need to flop down on the couch with a bunch of friends and lots of munchies and watch classic films like *Robot Monster* or *King Kong vs. Godzilla*. If you are blessed enough to receive *Mystery Science Theater 3000* on cable and you have some space in your living room, you could hardly do better than to invite your gaming group over to watch it. It's just another way of strengthening the bonds within your gaming group. Make sure there will be enough popcorn and drinks on hand, and get help in cleaning up afterward.

Speaking of videos, you can establish a group or club pool into which everyone puts a little money each week for rental costs. This does have some drawbacks in that you will have arguments over which movies to get, and some people might feel their choices are not being listened to ("But you've just *gotta* see *Blood Drinkers From Beyond Space*!"). It might be best if just one person picks out a few videos (with suggestions from other gamers), letting others toss in a little cash for reimbursement if they feel like it. If you do this, let the position of "film buyer" rotate to spread it around more evenly. Better yet, everyone who wants to see a particular video can bring it with him; if there's time to see them all, they all get seen. You can work out the details as you and your group like.

Bad movies, of course, aren't the only entertainment here. True classics of fantasy, horror, and science fiction cinema can be picked out to feed everyone's imagination for future games. Jim Lowder's column in this magazine, *Into the Dark*, is a superb resource; collect some of the earlier columns and look them over for suggestions. (I once watched a movie (*Miracle Mile*) based on his recommendations, and my skin is still crawling.) Cinema magazines, videostore catalogs, and video-review books will supply lots of other ideas.

Get *Them, Star Wars, Indiana Jones*

and the Last Crusade, and the original *King Kong* for sure, and consider the "Outer Limits" series now on video.

[*Note to Jim: I made up the "Blood Drinkers From Beyond Space" movie title, so don't get too excited.*]

On The Road Again

When I was a gamer in Louisville, our group would occasionally jump in our cars and run off on road trips. We once drove to Cincinnati to visit a special museum exhibit on medieval armor, which gave us lots of interesting thoughts about our AD&D® game. "Guess my paladin can't get into his armor as fast as I'd thought," said one of us after seeing a movie on how full plate was donned.

Another time, we drove back to Cincinnati to visit Ral Partha Enterprises, one of the major miniatures manufacturers in the U.S. We talked with the sculptors, saw their workshops, and went broke buying carloads of figures that we were never able to paint. It was great!

Ask your friends to check their newspapers and hobby shops for word of any interesting events coming up that your group might like to attend. Know of a local Renaissance Fair? Get the fantasy-gaming group together in a car and go see it. If you're running a science fiction campaign, a visit to a local planetarium, observatory, or NASA space center might be in order (you might even apply to go to Space Camp, if you dare). A time-travel campaign might lead to several museum visits (this area is lucky in that Milwaukee and Chicago are loaded with splendid museums with material of interest to almost any gamer).

If everyone is playing a military simulation like GDW's *Twilight: 2000* game, a trip to a military base, even a National Guard post if interesting vehicles and weapons are displayed, might be in order. Everyone could get something out of attending a gaming, fantasy, or science fiction convention within a three-hour drive from home (just check POLYHEDRON® Newszine and DRAGON® Magazine for details).

You could even justify going to the zoo to get an idea of what wild animals really look like ("Yeah, Kungo the Ogre *really* wants an elephant mount now!"). By the way, bring cameras to the zoo so that you can use the pictures later when you paint your army of miniature zebra cavalry.

You may discover some extremely interesting bookstores, museums, and collections in your area. Bardstown, KY, for instance, has a remarkable toy soldier museum that I've seen several times when visiting my brother's family there. A university might have a collection of artifacts taken from Egyptian tombs or burial mounds in North America. A used-books shop on the far side of town might have a massive assortment of fantasy and science fiction paperbacks on sale. The Dinamation robotic dinosaurs might pass through your neighborhood on tour. Keep your eyes peeled for surprises, and share them with others.

I almost forgot—you can see theater movies this way, too. I'm certainly planning to see *Jurassic Park* this summer, and I imagine there will be about two hundred gazillion gamers in the theater with me, cheering for the "raptors." Definitely watch the newspapers and film magazines for upcoming releases in your favorite gaming genre.

Yet More Ideas

Set aside one day, preferably a rainy or snowy one, for everyone to come over to your home to paint miniatures. If it's a sunny day, go outside and paint in the shade, maybe with a picnic lunch or barbecue. Set up a work area that's comfortable, has lots of light, and can seat everyone. Put down sheets or newspapers to prevent floor stains from spilled paint. Set down a few ground rules (no clowning with paints, no food on the work table, etc.). And make sure the area is well ventilated! Everyone can then bring over their paints, brushes, figures, etc., and slap red on lead to their heart's content.

If you or someone in your group is not used to painting figures, I strongly suggest that you get a copy of DRAGON Magazine issue #191 (March 1993) and read Jean McGuire's contribution to "Through the Looking Glass" before you set up the workspace; it has excellent instructions for the basic requirements in miniatures work. I'd even recommend it for experienced painters, as her advice is complete and often quite clever.

Does anyone get mail-order catalogs that someone else might want to order from? Miniatures, books, videos, gaming supplies, and more can be ordered in mass quantities. Pass your catalogs around and get the orders in. Several gaming groups I was with would put in mass orders every two months, with one trusted person taking orders and money; this was especially helpful when I was overseas with the military.

When I was taking aikido in Milwaukee, my martial-arts club used to have "home to home" meetings at which we would invite another aikido club to join us in practice, then have dinner afterward. You could do the same with other local gaming groups that you want to meet. If there's a local gaming personality who's not a member of your group (a game designer, a gaming-magazine author, the director of an RPGA® Network branch, etc.), invite him or her over for dinner and some gaming.

One of role playing's strongest assets is that it is a *social* activity. If you make the most of that angle, your group is going to lay down memories that will bring smiles to you for years to come. Go for it! ❑

The Everwinking Eye

Sevenecho, Then And Now

by Ed Greenwood

The Realms never fail to entrance me, with little hidden corners and unexpected beauties. Unfortunately, with unexpected beauty oft comes unexpected danger.

Elminster of Shadowdale, said to an apprentice
Year of The Torch

Our ongoing tour of the Realms has brought us to my study, where I had a few readers' queries about the Realms for the Old Mage to answer. One was for information about "Sevone." This puzzled Elminster, who muttered: "Sevone? No such place...."

When I showed him the map from *FR9/The Bloodstone Lands*, he muttered something dark about creative cartographers, and said: "That's not "Sevone," it's "Sevenecho," ye fool!"

Elminster was angry enough to lecture me (for as long as it took him to empty a few tankards) on the history and present lay of the land in Sevenecho. So here's the background lore for another little corner of the Realms.

Geography and Residents

Sevenecho is a hamlet of about 70 people located where the road from Procampur (The North Road) meets the trail (Stormcrest Trail) from Tsurlagol. It continues north through the Vast, ultimately to Mulmaster. The population includes outlying farmers; only about 35 or so folk live in Sevenecho itself. The place is named for its most prominent family.

Sevenecho is very small: the inn rises on the western side of the road junction. It faces a small cluster of farmhouses. There is one rooming house, run by Alaith Sharmtar (NG hf F4, retired), and the other residences house the local families of Hurtrin (noted as suppliers of fine radishes, parsnips, and pigs), Obaleth (the cheese makers), and Scantshar (who have a local reputation as "fey," thanks to the current matriarch, Riliyyn Scantshar, a CG hf W7). The various sons, cousins, and uncles of Beliost Sevenecho round out the population. The Sevenecho clan is about 40 strong.

Sevenecho serves as a market for local farmers. Each day during the summer and fall, at least one farmer sells produce from a wagon or stall (a temporary pole-and-awning affair) at the wide place where the roads meet. Twice each tenday, 4d4 farmers show up, selling eggs, cheese, smoked sausages, and all sorts of vegetables. Livestock is also brought along, but slaughtered only upon purchase. One retired farmer, Galzar Esklabra, makes rope—simple, rough, strong hempen cord, available in 50-foot-long coils (1 sp/coil) and shorter lengths. Another, Shaeld Crownwinter, crafts barrels and kegs that are sturdy and leak proof (1 sp to 8 gp, depending on size).

The roads meet at Sevenecho because of its ponds and deep wells, which allow travelers to water their beasts. A settlement persists here largely because of *The Worried Wyvern* inn, a fine establishment, and as good an inn as can be found anywhere in Faerun—although most folk in the Vast judge *The Wizard's Hand* in Maskyr's Eye to be a shade better.

Founded 19 winters ago by Beliost Sevenecho (LN hm F5), the *Wyvern* is a large, many-dormered place that rambles up and down a small knoll, sprouting many wings, side-chambers, jutting stone chimneys, and small towers. Built of wood atop cellars and a half-high ground floor of fieldstone, the *Wyvern* has a cedar-shingled roof. Its cellars house its own deep well, and the Wyvern offers more than 120 beds. There are only some 50 private rooms, however, and some of these are icy in winter because whole wings of the inn aren't heated or lit unless the rest of the place is full.

Guests can sleep and get good, filling meals (the soups and stews are justly famous) and baths with scented water. One can also buy fine smoked meats, adequate home-brewed beer, and strong-flavored local cheese.

Beliost runs the inn and prepares his own meats with the aid of a small smokehouse, which is dug into the hill behind the inn. Other family members make the beer and the cheese. Travelers are warned not to try to out-drink (or out-eat, for that matter) the large and rotund Sevenecho brothers and cousins; some of them have been known to empty in one sitting as large a keg as a strong man can carry.

Beliost is jovial, but quick in a fight. He wields two silver-plated *daggers +3* that can paralyze opponents. If Beliost wills it, any foe struck must save vs. spell or be held for 3d4 rounds.

Beliost is well informed about current events and politics in the Vast. He's a good listener and an easy-going man who makes friends effortlessly; just about every traveling merchant in the Vast counts Beliost as a true friend.

The *Wyvern* is known to have certain hidden cellars where Beliost keeps items, the public display of which would be embarrassing for this or that patron of the inn. Beliost even has a spare icehouse-cavern dug into the hill beside the stables. (The main icehouse is a cellar under the inn, to keep pilferage to a minimum.) Bodies have been known to lie in the spare icehouse for a day or two until quiet burials could be arranged.

Beliost has two pet hates: slavers and those who use magic to lord it over others, "throwing the weight of their spells around" as he puts it. All other folk find him pleasant and interested in their troubles and plans. A tenday rarely passes without some veteran adventurer or other stopping by to tell Beliost of his dreams and doings, just as he once did as a gawky, green youth.

Beliost is famous for once felling a fleeing orc in the night by hurling an axe out a window almost 200 yards. He has a natural aptitude for hurling axes, long swords, and smaller weapons of all sorts: allow him a THAC0 of 10 when throwing weapons up to 100′ distant, a THAC0 of 12 from 100′ to 160′ distant, and a THAC0 of 14 from 161′ to about 240′ distant. (He can't hurl any farther than that with damaging force.)

Beliost is always armed with five daggers: his magical pair at his belt, one hidden on a forearm sheath inside the voluminous sleeves of his shirt (the pleats, yoke, and open front of which give him a piratical look), and one in each boot. He has larger weapons behind the bar and concealed behind panels throughout the inn.

In a pinch, Beliost can call in favors from his neighbor Riliyyn Scantshar to obtain magical aid, and his staff gives him enthusiastic and eager, if un-

trained, support. This miniature battalion includes 14 chambermaids, seven hostlers, and two water-boys (all F1s). Another 3d10 Sevenecho lads (F1s to F3s) are typically only a shout away, working and sleeping in their nearby shops and houses.

Orc bands dwelling in the hills nearby know better than to raid Sevenecho: they can be facing 20 sharp blades only minutes after any alarm is raised.

Beliost has 11 sons and more than a dozen cousins. His second wife died a dozen summers ago, but he's declined to marry again since then. He has been known to keep company with no less than four of his chambermaids. These four senior chambermaids are Nionel Tlestlin, Lauryn Shavvyrstar, Mreeiel Klintar, and Chyndrie Stormwind (all F1s with 18 DEX scores). They get along easily with each other, and are fond of referring to Beliost as the chief adventurer in the band.

The other well-known native of Sevenecho is the current head of the Scantshar family. Riliyyn Scantshar is old, clings to the bony remnants of once-spectacular beauty, and has a sharp tongue and a ready ear for news and jokes. She wears old, faded embroidered silk gowns from Thay, has a pet pseudodragon, and freely passes on news of possible treasures and adventures to any who ask. She directs most folk north into the mountains, where she believes orc raiding bands have found a respectable amount of dwarven gold, and seized more than their share of booty from travelers.

She's right; there are at least two orc bands, each more than a dozen strong, but she doesn't much care if she's wrong. She'd like the orcs killed off, and she believes adventurers should be kept busy—elsewhere—if local peace is to be maintained.

Riliyyn has no magic items except her spell books (one set buried, another in her study, and a third hidden behind a loose stone in her cellar wall), 14 *potions of extra healing* (which she'll sell to those who ask for aid, for 50 gp each), and a special magic ring devised for her long ago that allows her to use the following spells, at 12th level, once a day: *blade barrier* (20'-radius sphere centered on her—she is immune to all effects, and the blades move with her or remain behind as she desires, duration one turn or less if she wills them to fade away); *dispel magic; hold undead; invisibility* (herself or another being she touches); *levitate; telekinesis;* and *wall of force.* The ring's magic replenishes these spells without memorization. To maintain it, Riliyyn must cast a spell—any spell—into it at least once every 10 days; if this is not done, one spell power is forever lost, followed by another power every five days thereafter. If the last power goes, the ring crumbles to dust.

Riliyyn lives with no less than 16 of her nieces and granddaughters (seven of whom are apprentices: NG and CG hf W3s or less. Each usually has *magic missile* and *unseen servant* spells memorized. Riliyyn doesn't go adventuring and rarely provides training to strangers, though she might allow someone to copy a first or second level spell (for at least 500 gp).

Though she may appear frail, Riliyyn has the means to protect herself; she has a number of spell triggers (special pre-cast magical effects of her own devising). These spells lie dormant until she causes them to take effect later—years later if need be—by silent effort of will. They can do the following:

- *Teleport:* She is instantly transported to her study, where three battle horrors (animated suits of armor with magical abilities) wait to defend her. A fourth battle horror appears wherever she was before *teleporting*. For statistics, see the Helmed Horror MC entry in the module *FA1/Halls of the High King*, or in the revised boxed *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Set.* DMs lacking these sources can replace them with baneguards, guardian skeletons, or similar monsters.
- *Fireball:* A 7d6 missile bursts 21 feet in front of her. Riliyyn has five of these, and a sixth that can be triggered to burst in the center of the wide gravel area where the two roads meet.
- *Heal:* Riliyyn or another being she's touching regains lost hit points. She has two of these spells.
- *Neutralize poison:* This works on herself or on a creature she's touching.

As far as interesting folks in Sevenecho go, there's not much beyond Beliost and Riliyyn, but someone in Sevenecho—probably one of the inn staff—is an agent for the Red Wizards of Thay. Elminster doesn't know who this agent is (yet), but the spy is responsible for watching and reporting who and what passes on the roads. This unknown spy is not a field agent, and never lifts blade or hand to betray his or her allegiance by murder, robbery, or other active deed.

No one in Sevenecho is a competent road guide for the Vast; most residents have never been more than seven miles from home. Bluth Hurtrin and Nym Obaleth can both repair wagons; they typically charge 15 gp for repairing a broken frame, and 25 gp per wheel they must replace.

Alaith Sharmtar is the only source of clothing. Her wares are used, but in good shape; prices are 1d4 cp for most garments, one sp for a gown, cloak, or pair of boots. Alaith repairs clothing for one cp a garment. She charges four sp a night for a bed, or one gp a night for a room, which includes hot buttered bread, a sausage and fruit, and a carafe of weak wine or hand-keg (about three tankards) of home brew. This beverage is a thick, dark, cinnamon-spiced barley beer.

Idle Talk

Sevenecho has few local legends about monsters or magic, beyond everpresent news of death and destruction befalling travelers in the dangerous mountains to the north (and a general mistrust of the Scantshar family). Locals often see "the ghost of the drowned lady" by Ghost Pond, a large, shallow pool by the roadside just north of Sevenecho (she's actually a phantom, detailed in Volume 11 of the *Monstrous Compendium,* and can lead to whatever adventure a DM™ desires).

There's also a tale of the last days of dwarven rule in the Vast:

Nine dwarves each buried a chest of gems somewhere very near the meeting of the roads in Sevenecho, before the orcs that were pursuing them caught up and slaughtered them all. Elminster tells me this tale is true, and as far as he knows, a certain dark naga (q.v., FR13/Anauroch, MC11, or in the revised boxed Forgotten Realms Campaign Set) found the treasure and probably keeps it in a lair near Sevenecho.

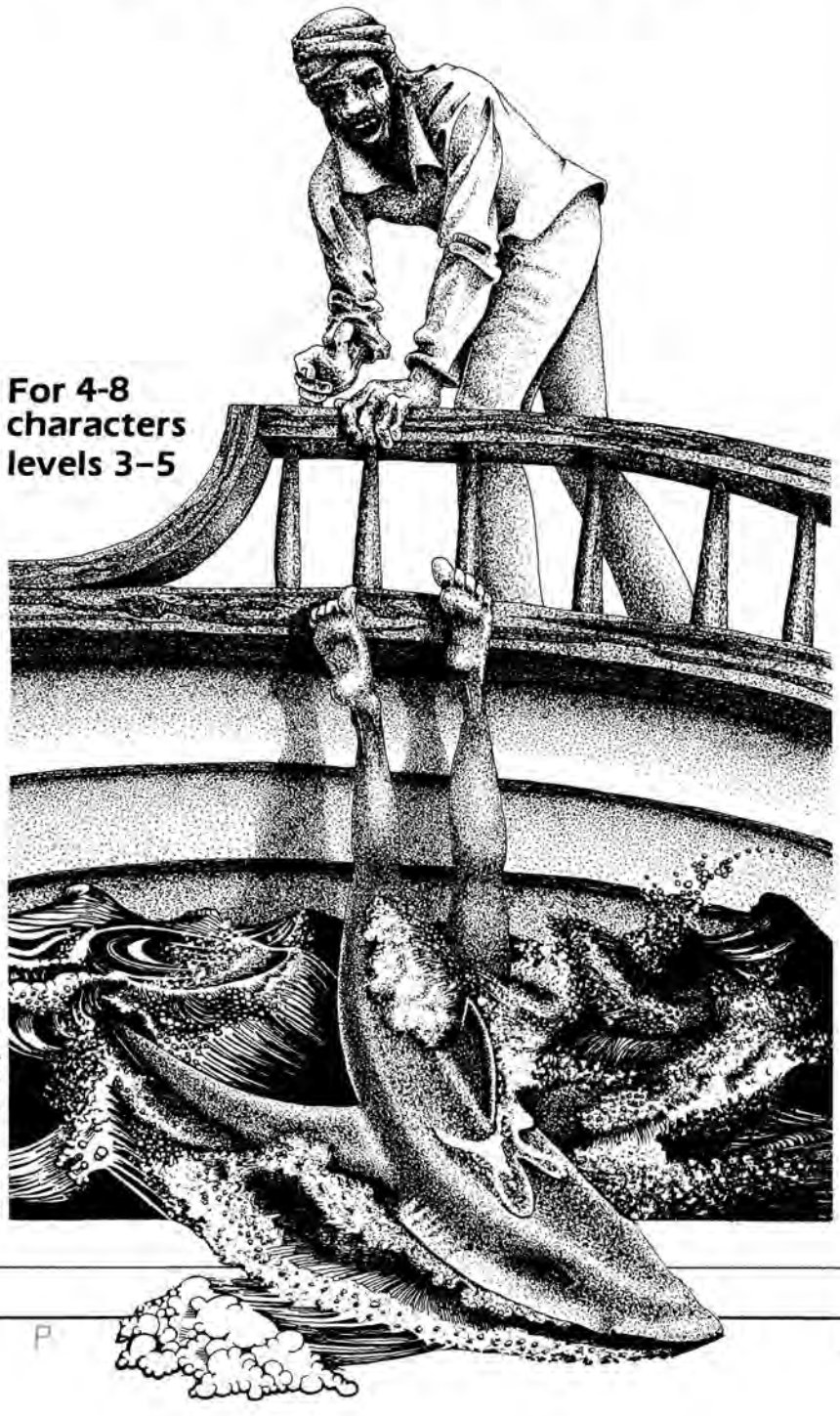
When I asked Elminster for more details on Sevenecho, he merely shrugged and said, "It has damp weather—lots of morning mists, as I recall. Naught else of note that I remember. Oh, if ye stop in the *Wyvern,* ye might give my greetings to Nionel, a chambermaid there. She's the one with the long, long hair, an'—hmmph; never mind. She'll remember me."

❑

A Living City Adventure

Eye Of The Leviathan

By Randall Lemon and Ed Peterson



For 4-8 characters levels 3–5

Illustration by Larry Smith

DM™ Background

Centuries ago a great war raged beneath the Sea of Fallen Stars. The malevolent denizens of the deep, led by the evil deities Umberlee and Talos, sought to subjugate the watery realm.

The good creatures prayed to Istishia and Silvanus, and in reply the gods created a powerful artifact, the *Eye of the Leviathan,* and gave it to the king of the tritons. With the *Eye* the king rallied the forces of good and the creatures of the sea, and won the war.

The tritons enshrined the *Eye of the Leviathan* in a temple in the very depths of the Sea of Fallen Stars. There, it remained undisturbed—until recently when a series of events brought it to Ravens Bluff.

An aboleth learned of the *Eye* and concocted a plan to obtain it. At the aboleth's bidding, a tribe of sahaugin attacked the tritons, and a brave sahaugin soldier made off with the artifact. Before he could return the prize to the aboleth, however, the pursuing tritons critically wounded him. The sahaugin hid in a partially-submerged sea cave and died.

A group of smugglers found the *Eye.* They perceived the thing as nothing more than a fancy bauble, and took the *Eye* to nearby Ravens Bluff and used it to bribe Lord Charles Frederick Blacktree, the former speaker of the Advisory Council, into using his wealth and influence to have one of their comrades released from prison.

To further complicate the story, Lord Blacktree only possessed the *Eye* for a week before the smugglers, with their freed friend in tow, broke into the lord's home and stole back the bauble.

Lord Blacktree hires the PCs to retrieve the *Eye.* This is where the adventure begins.

Players' Introduction

A young man approaches as you lounge in the inn's common room. His dress indicates he serves one of city's lords.

"Good day, my fine fellows. You are...?" He pauses, waiting for you to introduce yourselves. "My name is Stephan Loric. He whom I serve has requested I seek you out and bring you to meet him. This endeavor will result in a financial gain for you. But this is a matter of great delicacy, and

he has asked me not to reveal his name. He would like you to meet him at four bells, one hour from now, at an address that I will give you.

"My employer further asks that you leave this inn at different times so that no more than two of you are traveling together. I assure this thing he will ask you to do is legal. The address—25 Ravenwood Lane."

If the PCs ask questions before Stephan departs, he emphasizes the financial rewards for their service. Stephan knows about the city, the weather, the current clothing styles, and trends in exotic foods. Stephan does not know what the mission is. Further, he refuses to divulge the name of his lord. If the PCs magically *charm* him or otherwise force an answer, he reveals he works for Lord Charles Frederick Blacktree, the former speaker of the Advisory Council. If the PCs follow Stephan, he leads them, via a long, roundabout course, to 25 Ravenwood Lane.

As you arrive at the address given to you by Loric, you find a rather nondescript building, probably a residence. Your knock is answered by Stephan, who leads you to a comfortably appointed sitting room.

A man stands at the far end of the room facing into the fireplace. After a moment's silence the figure turns, and you see Lord Charles Frederick Blacktree IV. He is a powerful man in Ravens Bluff.

"I find myself in need of a group with your particular talents. And I am prepared to pay you well if you promise that what we say here will not go beyond these walls."

He pauses for your answer.

"Recently, a number of items were stolen from my estate, among them a valuable heirloom. I do not wish to involve the City Watch, as I fear that a noisy investigation may lead to these items being quickly smuggled from the city.

The heirloom is the *Eye*. Lord Charles does not want the City Watch to know about it because he received the *Eye* as a bribe in exchange for having a smuggler released from prison. If an official were to learn of his indiscretion, Lord Blacktree would be publicly embarrassed. The lord knows only the monetary value of the *Eye*, 5,000 GP, and he has no idea that it is a powerful artifact called the *Eye of the Leviathan*.

Satisfied with your acceptance, Lord Blacktree clears his throat, adjusts his silk ascot, and continues.

"Among the items stolen were a pair of silver candlesticks, a gold neck chain, a small pouch containing 20 garnets, a velvet pouch with 25 antique platinum pieces, and the heirloom itself. The heirloom is a translucent amber orb about four inches in diameter with a large black pearl in its center. The heirloom has been in my family for some time.

"The thief was a servant of mine, who disappeared after the theft. I have made some discreet inquiries on my own and have learned that he frequents an establishment near the waterfront. The place is called, of all things, Embrol Sludge's Eatery & Shell Shoppe. If you undertake this investigation, I suggest that you begin there. In exchange for your help recovering the orb, I will give you each 400 gold pieces.

"I would like to get all of my stolen possessions back, of course. But you must retrieve the orb, as it has great sentimental value. Here are directions to Embrol Sludge's, and an address at which you can reach Stephan once you have recovered my property. Oh, yes, I almost forgot. If you recover things in addition to what I've listed, I suppose you can keep them."

Embrol Sludge

As you approach the waterfront district, you notice a crowd gathering in front of a building. The place's sign reads: *Embrol Sludge's Eatery and Sea Shell Shoppe: Where seafood is held dear, ye are welcome here.*

The PCs can easily elbow their way through the people to the open front door. If they stay outside, this encounter comes to them.

You are greeted by a brawl in progress! A dozen rough-looking sailors are fighting with a few townsmen. A young giant of a man is being kept busy by four sailors. A much smaller young man is fighting with one large sailor. There is also a young woman caught in a corner and being menaced by two more sailors. The other toughs in the fight are engaged in tearing up and smashing tables, counters, bottles, and the like.

The only weapons being wielded are a dagger in the small townsman's hand, belaying pins in all the sailors' hands, and a club in the large townsman's hand.

An elderly man nearby is swinging a chair at the sailors.

As you take in all this, one of the sailors grabs the girl and throws her onto his shoulder. She pummels futilely at his back as he laughs.

The good guys:

Embrol Sludge (elderly man with chair): Int Average; AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; HD 5 (F5); hp 38; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (chair); SZ M; ML 18; XP 175.

Embrol is 59 years old, balding, and has a pot-belly. He is 5'10" tall, weighs 205 pounds, had has steel gray eyes.

Dirk Sludge (young man with dagger): Int Average; AL CN; AC 9; MV 12; HD 1 (T1); hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SZ M; ML 16; XP 15.

Dirk is 15 years old, 5'7" tall, weighs 148 pounds, and has light brown hair and gray eyes.

Radea Sludge (menaced pretty girl): Int Average; AL NG; AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (fist); SZ M; ML 17; XP 15.

Radea is 26 years old, 5'5" tall, weighs 108 pounds, and has sandy blond hair and sea green eyes. She has a greenish-silver tinge to her complexion, as she is half sea elf.

Buddy (giant townsman): Int Average; AL NG; AC 7; MV 12; HD 1 (F1); hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+3 (club +STR); SZ M; ML 18; XP 15.

Buddy is 6'8" tall, weighs 285 pounds, has brown hair, brown eyes, and is 24.

The bad guys:

Smugglers (4): Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 1 (F1); hp 10 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 (belaying pin); SZ M; ML 12; XP 15 each.

Smugglers (4): Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 2 (F2); hp 18 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 (belaying pin); SZ M; ML 12; XP 35 each.

Smugglers (2): Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 3 (F3); hp 22 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 (belaying

pin); SZ M; ML 12; XP 35 each.

Smugglers (4): Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 4 (F4); hp 34 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 (belaying pin); SZ M; ML 12; XP 65 each.

Smuggler: Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 5 (F5); hp 38; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (chair); SZ M; ML 14; XP 175.

Just as the PCs subdue or finish off the last of the smugglers, the city guard arrives.

Embrol explains the sailors were spoiling for a fight. A few of them were ogling this orb they had sitting in the center of their table. The orb was translucent amber, about the size of an orange with a large black pearl embedded in it. The sailors were joking about lifting it from some noble's house.

Embrol says one of the sailors ran off with the orb when the fight broke out.

Dirk Sludge says he recognizes the sailor who ran off with the gem.

> "My friends and I spend quite a bit of time hanging around the waterfront. The reason the sailor sticks out in my mind so much is I happened to be visiting a girl who helps old Meg Cracken at her boarding house on the waterfront. As I was sneaking out the boarding house's back door, I almost ran into this guy sneaking in. I'm not sure, but maybe he lives there when he's in port.
>
> "The sailor looked old—at least 30. He had a cutlass strapped to his side, just like a pirate would wear. He had long auburn hair, about the length I'd like mine to grow, and he had a straggly red moustache. He was wearing black leather armor when I saw him—the same outfit he had on at Meg Cracken's. And he has a tattoo of a dancing girl on his right forearm. He was kind of neat looking, and at the same time he definitely looked kind of dangerous."

Dirk supplies directions to Cracken's Berth and Board. Dirk does not know the name of the sailor, nor the ship he works on.

The city guards have no intention of investigating the amber orb, as no one has reported such a thing missing.

Meg Cracken's

> The sights and odors of the waterfront assault your senses. The smell of fresh and not-so-fresh fish mingles with the briny sea air as merchants hawk their wares and longshoremen manhandle bulky cargo. Soon you arrive at your destination, a ramshackle two-story building with a weathered shingle proclaiming *Cracken's Berth and Board.*
>
> An equally weathered old lady dressed in a gray smock is putting up a vacancy sign as you approach.

The lady is Meg Cracken, the proprietor of the boarding house. If the PCs question her, she demands to know why the party is interested in one of her tenants. Before giving them any information she bemoans the high cost of operating a business, obviously looking for a bribe.

If the party offers sufficient money (at least 2 gp), she says a man matching the description stays here when in port. Another gold piece yields the man's name—Jud Jimson—and that he left a little more than a half hour ago, muttering about landing a job on a big merchant ship leaving right away. Meg suggests the PCs ask some of the dock workers if they have seen the man.

The Docks

> There are only three sizeable ships in port, though there are also a small number of fishing boats. Walking the length of the wharf, you can see the names on the ships' sides—*Fleet Wind, Captain's Pride,* and *Sea Foam Follower.* Numerous sailors are loading cargo on and off the ships.
>
> There are also people who might be ships' officers and a smattering of merchant-types going in and out of a wooden building at the end of the wharf. A large sign with the official city seal hangs above the building's door. It reads *Harbormaster.*

The party can either question the sailors or go to the harbormaster.

The sailors are glad to take a break from their work and gab. However, no long conversations are possible because mates in charge of work details make the sailors go back to work. The following information may be gained by talking to the sailors:

- The *Fleet Wind* is a speedy packet ship that primarily delivers mail up and down the coast. Most of the mail consists of contracts, instructions from a city or country to its ambassador in another country, and other official forms. There is, however, also a small amount of personal mail delivered. Because of the official nature of most of the mail, there is always a small detachment of guards aboard. The current guard unit is from Ravens Bluff. The *Fleet Wind* is heading for Calaunt by way of Tantras. No passengers. No new crew members.

- The *Captain's Pride* is a freelance cargo vessel. Bolts of cloth are being loaded on her to be taken to Tsurlargol for sale. There are three passengers, all male: two young men traveling together (late teens, early 20s), and one much older (early 50s). No new crew members.

- The *Sea Foam Follower* arrived earlier today from Tantras and is still offloading its cargo of spiced wine and various dry goods. Its next consignment of goods is already on the docks. It is headed to Procampur. The captain just hired three new seamen.

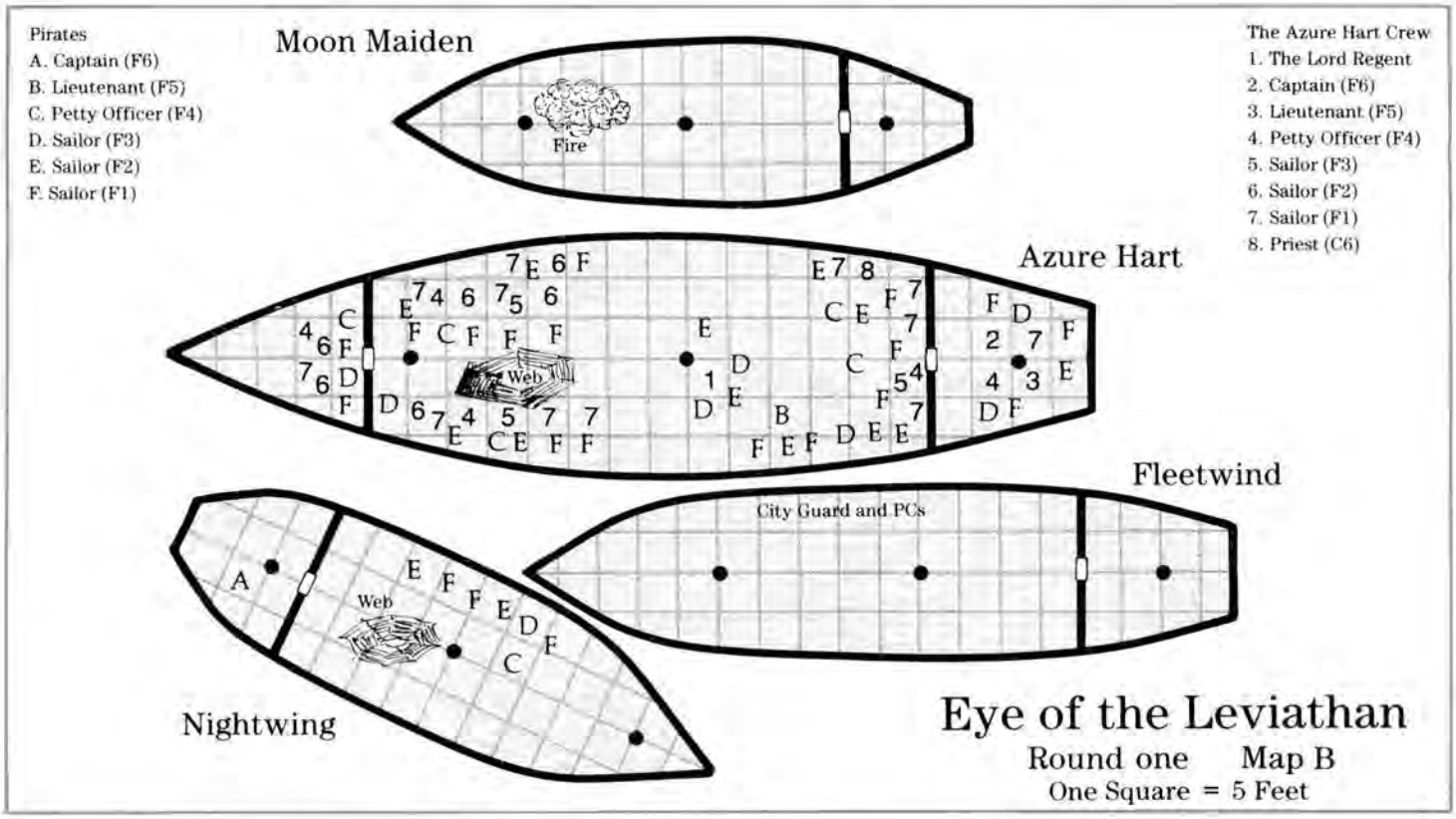
- Two ships left recently—the *Azure Hart* and the *Moon Maiden.* the *Hart,* which belongs to Lord Regent Thomas Raphiel, left a little more than an hour ago. Lord Thomas himself is aboard, and is headed to a diplomatic mission of some kind or other in Tantras. As for the *Moon Maiden,* the sailors all feel the crew is a bad lot at best, and many of them suspect the ship of smuggling and worse. They know that this fast ship left a little over a half hour ago, and its crew departed in great haste.

Sailors (lots of them): Int Varies; AL NG; AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 (belaying pin); SZ M; ML Varies; XP Nil.

The Harbormaster

If the PCs go to the Harbormaster's office, they find the harbormaster studying maps. He knows roughly the same information as the sailors.

Inside the Harbormaster's office is a salty old sea-dog, who listens in on every conversation. If the PCs mention the *Moon Maiden,* the sea-dog interrupts the conversation.



"Harrumph! Harrumph I say!" The voice obviously belongs to the crusty old sea captain sitting near a large barrel. He motions for you to approach. You notice that his left eye is milky white. He turns, and you see that his left leg is missing below the knee. He wears an ivory peg leg, which he thumps on the ground as you walk near.

"The *Moon Maiden?* You're asking about that bucket?" He snorts derisively. "The *Moon Maiden's* a black scow, almost as black as the crew what sails 'er. Wherever the *Moon Maiden* sails, she leaves tainted water beind. 'Er crew's the flotsam 'n jetsam o'the inner sea. Cutthroats an worse be those that man 'er. Blest be the rock or reef that rips 'er hull and sends 'er and 'er scurvy crew to the bottom. As soon as she leaves port, it's not long after that we hear of some ship scuttled, or attacked by pirates, or just plain disappearin', ne'er to be seen again. But I guess you'd say that was just a mighty big coincidence, wouldn't ya? I heard the *Maiden's* headed for Tantras. Harrumph! More likely headed toward ships going that way."

Seeking Passage

The only ship headed north is the *Fleet Wind,* which is just getting ready to leave. The PCs can book passage, though their quarters won't be anything fancy. Passage is 5 gp each.

A small detachment of city guardsmen are on board. A few of these helped with the altercation at Embrol Sludge's.

At Sea

Dawn has broken on a brilliantly beautiful day as you climb up on deck for some fresh air. The steady southerly wind has hastened the *Fleet Wind* on her journey. Suddenly, the lookout in the crow's nest shouts, "Ships ahoy! One point off the port bow!"

As you strain your eyes toward the northern horizon, a bright orange ball sprouts from the midst of the distant ships and just as quickly goes out, leaving a blooming mushroom of black smoke in its wake.

You hear the ship's captain bark commands, and the crew jumps to obey. A guard sergeant rushes to the quarterdeck and joins the captain in scanning the distance. The captain curses and hands his spyglass to the sergeant, who, after a brief scrutiny, hands it back and shouts to his men.

"It's the *Azure Hart* all right, and she's bein' waylaid by two ships flyin' the skull an' bones!"

One of the ship's petty officers unlocks a padlock securing a pair of sturdy double doors revealing a well-stocked weapons locker. Cutlasses, rapiers, and daggers gleam brightly in the morning sun.

The officer starts handing out weapons to the sailors who are arriving on deck. Your eyes are drawn to the battle in the distance. You can see the three ships locked in a deadly dance.

The guard sergeant approaches while tightening the straps on his chain mail.

"The Captain says that's the lord regent's ship, the *Azure Hart.* You can just make out the pennant of Ravens Bluff flyin' from her mast. The one on the right, the one burnin,' he tells me is the *Moon Maiden.* The other one he's not sure about, but he thinks it may be the *Nightwing.* Now I know this ain't your fight, but we're goin' in, and their ain't no

guarantees that you won't get dragged in anyways. The captain is gonna bring the *Fleet Wind* in fast and try to wedge her between the *Azure Hart* and the unhurt pirate, hopin' we can break her loose. We'll board the *Hart* directly. Me and my men are goin' over the starboard side onto the *Hart*. We sure could use a hand on that side if you're willing."

Run the battle depending on the PCs' actions. As the *Fleet Wind* quickly approaches, the action becomes clearer. Most of the fighting is on the *Azure Hart,* and it looks as if the *Moon Maiden's* crew is abandoning their flaming ship in an attempt to take the *Hart.*

The results of several *web* and *hold person* spells are visible.

The bow of the *Fleet Wind* slips cleanly between the *Azure Hart's* stern and the pirate's bow. As the *Fleet Wind* grinds to a halt, sailors hurl grappling hooks onto the *Hart.*

Guardsmen scramble over the rail and onto the deck of the *Azure Hart,* to be met by a force of seven pirates. The PCs see one of the brigands, with long auburn hair, a red moustache, and wearing black leather, break off from melee and dash onto the burning *Moon Maiden.*

It is up to the PCs what part they take in this battle. If they pursue the man in black leather, read the following:

As you search for your quarry, you see an older gentleman in fine clothing. He is fighting four of the brigands single-handedly with his back to the mast. You realize it can be none other than Lord Regent Thomas Raphiel. The lord is wounded and in need of aid. The man clad in black leather has reached the burning ship's deck and seems to be making himself scarce.

The PCs can help the lord regent, pursue the man in black leather, or fight some of the other pirates. It is likely the PCs will separate. It is easy for the party to tell the pirates from the crew of the *Azure Hart.* The crewmen are in blue and gold uniforms, and the pirates are in a motley mix of clothing and armor.

If the PCs come to the aid of the lord regent, three attacking pirates turn their attention to the PCs, while one pirate continues on the lord regent. Use the statistics for 3rd level pirates below.

If the PCs attempt to join the *Fleet Wind's* crew in a general melee, use the statistics for the pirates below, mixing their levels. Make sure each PC has two or three pirates on him or her at all times.

If the PCs chase the man in black onto the flaming *Moon Maiden,* a few 3rd level pirates attack them. The pirates slow the PCs down by dropping burning sails on them, swinging the rigging, and starting sword fights. Burning yardarms fall in their paths, and other obstacles prevent the PCs from catching their target.

Eventually, allow the PCs to make it across to the *Moon Maiden.*

As you scramble over and around the dead and the dying, you cross the gangplank onto the blazing *Moon Maiden.* The hatchway to the lower decks bangs open, and two naked men, one with a small wooden chest in his hands, run out and dive over the starboard rail. A third naked man runs out, pursued by a bloody pirate dressed in black leather and wielding a cutlass. The naked man turns to face the pirate and blocks a cutlass stroke with his bare arm. The man is unhurt; he laughs maniacally, and swats the pirate to the deck with his open hand. The naked man turns and dashes to the starboard rail.

The PCs can now react; roll initiative. If the naked man wins, he hurls himself overboard. The PCs see the man transform into a shark as he hits the water. If the party wins initiative, they can get one round of free attacks before he dives overboard. PCs who dive overboard can fight the wereshark in the water.

Assume the first two weresharks got away with the *Eye*—this is crucial for the rest of the adventure. The aboleth mentioned in the introduction sent the weresharks.

If the PCs check on the downed man, Jud Jimson, they find him near death. If the PCs cure Jimson, he confirms that he stole Lord Blacktree's bauble, and that it was in the chest that went over the side. Jimson has no idea where the naked men came from.

Crew of the *Azure Hart*

Lord Regent Thomas Raphiel: Int Exceptional; AL LG; AC 6; MV 12; HD 5 (F5); hp 31 (currently 11); THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10+3; SZ M; ML 19; XP 270.

Lord Thomas is 6'2" tall, 195 lbs., 67 years old. His magic items include *Bracers AC 6, ring of truth, quarterstaff +2, long sword +3.*

Captain Jonas Weatherby: Int Average; AL LG; AC 8; MV 12; HD 6 (F6); hp 42; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8+1; SZ M; ML 14; XP 270.

Lieutenant: Int Average; AL LG; AC 8; MV 12; HD 5 (F5); hp 28; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SZ M; ML 13; XP 175.

Petty Officers (2): Int Average; AL NG; AC 8; MV 12; HD 4 (F4); hp 30 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 11; XP 120 each.

Sailors (3): Int Average; AL NG; AC 9; MV 12; HD 3 (F3); hp 25 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65 each.

Sailors (6): Int Average; AL NG; AC 9; MV 12; HD 2 (F2); hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 9; XP 35 each.

Sailors (12): Int Average; AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1 (F1); hp 8 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 9; XP 15 each.

Hendra Tredwell: Int Average; AL LG; AC 2 (plate and shield); MV 6; HD 6 (P6); hp 33; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2-7; SZ M; ML 16; XP 650.

Spells remaining: *Cure light wounds* (×3), *withdraw, know alignment, chant, continual light*

Sardoli Quislin: Int Exceptional; AL LG; AC 2 (*bracers of defense AC 2*); MV 12; HD 9 (W9); hp 23 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 12; XP 3,000.

Sardoli Quislin is incapacitated by a *hold person* spell.

Spells remaining: *Light, scare, dispel magic, invisibility, stoneskin, dimension door, airy water*

City Guardsmen Detail (8): Int Average; AL NG; AC 7; MV 12; HD 2 (F2); hp 16 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 14; XP 35 each.

Guard Sergeant: Int Average; AL NG; AC 4; MV 9; HD 4 (F4); hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 15; XP 175.

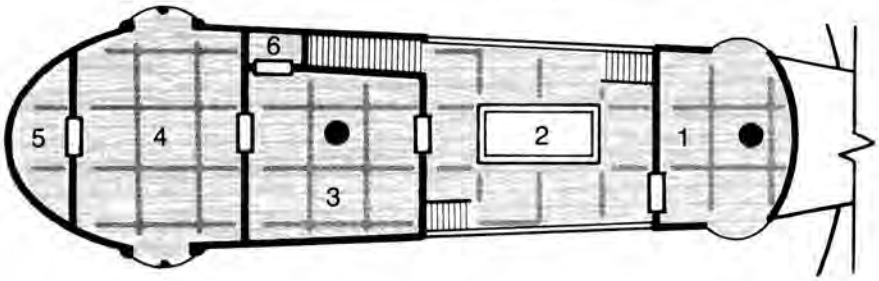
Pirate Crew

Pirate Captain: Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 6 (F6); hp 38; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8+1; SZ M; ML 12; XP 270.

SQUID SHIP

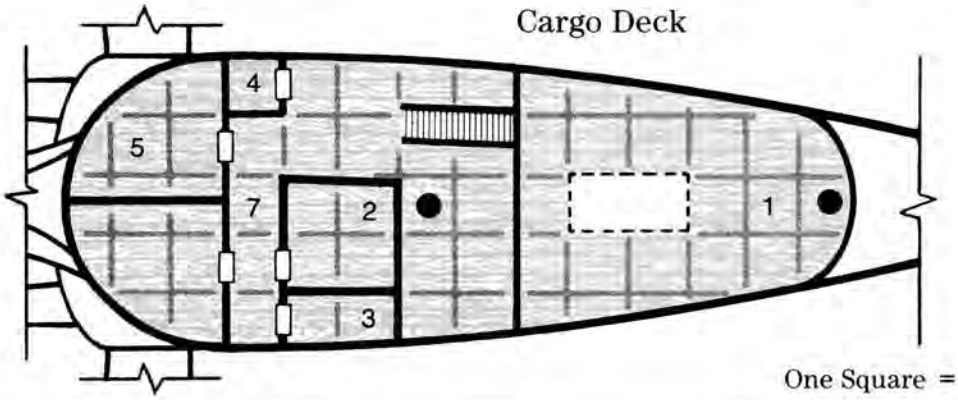
Main Deck

1. Spelljammer Helm & Chart Room
2. Cargo Door
3. Saloon/Galley
4. Captain's Quarters
5. Storage
6. Head/Storage



Cargo Deck

1. Cargo Bay
2. Crew Quarters
3. Bosun's Locker
4. Head Storage
5. Crew Quarters
6. Officers' Quarters
7. Companionway



One Square = 5 Feet

Lieutenants (2): NA 2; Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 5 (F5); hp 28 each; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 10; XP 175 each.

Petty Officers (7): 7; Int Average; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 4 (F4); hp 30 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 10; XP 120 each.

Sailors (8): Int Average; AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 3 (F3); hp 25 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65 each.

Sailors (16): Int Average; AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 2 (F2); hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 9; XP 35 each.

Sailors (16): Int Average; AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1 (F1); hp 8 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 9; XP 15 each.

Jud Jimson: Int Average; AL NE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 3 (F3); hp 28 (currently 1); THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 8; XP 65.

Weresharks (3): Int Average; AL NE; AC 0; MV 12, Sw 21; HD 10+3; hp 45 each; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 5-20; SD Hit only by silver, or +1 or better magical weapons; SZ L; ML 17; XP 2,000 each.

Fires rage around you, and a smoke-shrouded man waves you aboard the *Azure Hart*. You see figures scurrying about preparing to cut the lines that bind the *Hart* to the burning and sinking pirate vessel.

You rush onto the other ship just as the lines are cut and sailors push the fiery hulk away from the *Hart* with long poles. The *Moon Maiden* begins a slow descent to its watery grave.

Turning in the opposite direction, you see the other pirate ship making good its escape. Lord Thomas limps toward you with his hand extended.

"Your actions were truly heroic, and I owe you my appreciation. If there is a favor I can do, name it."

If the PCs tell the lord they are searching for something taken into the sea, Lord Thomas says there is a colony of aquatic elves nearby who know this area of the sea extremely well. These elves might be able to help them find the item they're looking for. He offers to sail the party to just above the elven community and give each PC three *potions of water breathing*. Each potion contains four doses, guaranteeing each PC a minimum of 12 hours total underwater. He also offers the party a formal letter of introduction (on a wax tablet) to the elven community's leaders and a request that the elves help the PCs.

When the PCs travel underwater, pay attention to the spells they cast and weapons they use. Type S and type B weapons do not work, but type P weapons, such as spears, do. Consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information about fighting and casting spells underwater.

The Sea Elves

You dive below the waves and soon the *Azure Hart's* anchor comes into view, planted firmly on the rim of a large undersea valley overgrown with giant kelp. A pair of dolphins dart away and disappear into the kelp.

The dolphins are scouts for the sea elves. They bring a patrol of elves to meet the PCs.

The leader of the patrol addresses the

PCs in Elven. If the PCs do not know this language, they have to communicate via hand signals.

> The sea elf swims back and forth in front of you. "What is your business in our realm?"
>
> He is armed with a trident and net and is wearing chain mail. There is a conch shell horn slung over his shoulder. His eight men are nearby.

If the PCs state their intent and display the lord regent's letter, the sea elf agrees to take the party to the sea elf city. The elven patrol forms around the party and leads them down into the valley. It takes two hours to reach the city. The community is centrally located and is home to nearly 300 elves. The buildings are "grown" from living coral and are surrounded by beautiful gardens of various marine flora and fauna. An elderly male elf wearing ornate scale armor approaches the PCs. He is Marafaristin, the elder of the village.

If the PCs show him Lord Thomas's letter, Marafaristin says his scouts reported that a pair of weresharks (or three if the third got away) preceded the PCs and swam in the opposite direction of the sea elf city. He is certain they are going to their cavern, about a dozen miles from here. He can provide the PCs precise directions, as the sea elves watch the weresharks closely. It takes the PCs about five hours to walk there.

If the PCs describe the amber orb, a concerned look clouds Marafaristin's face, but he shrugs it off. Marafaristin has heard vague legends about the *Eye of the Leviathan,* but doubts that the party could have anything to do with the artifact.

If the PCs ask for aid in breathing underwater, Marafaristin provides each PC with two *potions of water breathing.* each with four doses.

Ship Ahoy!

> In the murky distance, an ominous, gigantic shape looms. It is long and low, lying along the bottom.
>
> Even at this distance, the size and shape of the creature leaves no doubt, you are looking at a giant squid, one of the most fearsome predators of the deep!

No matter how long they watch the squid, it does not move—and there is apparently no way around it. Eventually, the party has to approach it.

> As you come to within 100 yards of the giant squid's head, you realize it is not a monster. It is a ship in the shape of a squid. An odd, but rhythmic rumbling comes from inside the ship.

If the PCs bypass the ship, go on to the next encounter.

If the characters approach the ship, they can tell the strange sounds are coming from behind a hatch on the main deck. If they open this hatch, they are greeted by a strange sight. A large gray walrus dances and sings in the middle of a comfortably appointed room. The walrus croons the following verse to the tune of "I'm Gettin Married in the Morning" from *My Fair Lady.*

> *"Im going fishin' in the morning,*
> *Ding-dong the bells are gonna chime.*
> *I'll catch some long ones an' maybe some small ones*
> *Oh get me to the fishin' grounds on time."*
>
> He notices you and breaks off his song and dance.

If the PCs do not threaten the walrus, he relaxes. If they talk to him, he breaks into another song, this one to the tune of "I Am the Walrus" by the Beatles.

> *"You are all strangers, ohhhhhh*
> *Why should I trust you? ohhhhhhh*
> *I am the walrus, GooGooGooJoob."*

This should prompt the party to either introduce themselves or ask for information. The walrus's name is GooGooGooJoob, and he only communicates by singing. He responds with his next ditty to the tune of "Come Home to Bonnie Jean" from *Brigadoon.*

> *"In far Calaunt I used to roam*
> *Though never one place could be called my home*
> *that was in past years—ten*
> *but I won't be there again.*
>
> *A bard I was in that past life*
> *And if I'd stayed away from that wizard's wife*
> *A bard I still might be*
> *But that bard's no longer me.*
>
> *Not me!*
> *Not me!*
> *The bard's no longer me.*
> *Not me!*
> *Not me!*
> *No... a walrus now I be."*

If the PCs haven't yet introduced themselves, or if they ask about the ship the walrus is on, GooGooGooJoob responds with the next song, to the tune of "If I Were a Rich Man" from *Fiddler on the Roof.*

> *"If I knew who you were*
> *I might ask you to come in and take a seat within my house,*
> *then we could together have a chat*
> *Unless you mean to do me harm—eh?*
> *We could share some fresh fish*
> *and you'd tell me what a group as strange as yours is doing here.*
> *I might try to help you if I can...*
> *But only if you'll sing a song for me.*
>
> *I'd...like...to...hear you sing of gold and adventure and of exciting fights you've had.*
>
> *Tell me what you seek and if I can help.*
>
> *And...if...your...song is pleasing you might find that I have some presents for you all,*
> *And then we'd bid farewell as good, old friends.*
>
> (Sigh)
>
> *You, who have come unbidden to my home,*
> *now should entertain me with a song or poem,*
> *Can you sing of adventures that you've known?*
> *If...you care to be my friends!"*

The characters must come up with a musical reply or the walrus won't have anything to do with them.

Once the party indicates they need to move on or reacts to the presents line in the "If I Were A Rich Man" tune, GooGooGooJoob respond with the next offering, sung to the tune of "On the Street Where You Live" from *My Fair Lady.*

> *"I have often searched through this ship before,*
> *But there's little here that I cannot ignore.*
> *Still there's many things, that might have worth to kings.*
> *Yes, there here on the ship where I live.*

You may check the ship and take what you will.
In exchange you leave me bait fish or a mackerel.
Leave me one for each, you keep in your reach,
And I'll feel you've been honest to me."

GooGooGooJoob, Bard Walrus (1): Int Low; AL CN; AC 1; MV Sw 18; HD 8; hp 54; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 (tusk gore); SZ L; ML 10; XP 650.

GooGooGooJoob used to be a high-level bard. The only bard skill he has retained is his singing ability. Whenever talking as GooGooGooJoob, the DM should sing.

GooGooGooJoob knows nothing about the weresharks, the *Eye,* or anything else really useful to the party.

As he finishes his last song, he moves to the cabin door and points out. Immediately across from his quarters is the chart room. The spelljamming helm was kept here. However, it was looted long ago. The other door is a closed hatch going below decks. After he has pointed out the two doors, GooGooGooJoob points at a school of bait fish swimming nearby the ship, rubs his tummy, and ducks back into his quarters.

Exploring the Squid

Cargo Level

The Cargo Bay is not illuminated and is consequently pitch black. Once a light source has been provided, read the following.

Down below is what appears to be the main cargo hold. It is slightly over 20 feet wide at its thickest point and approximately 40 feet long. It is piled high with large crates and wicker baskets. Forward in the cargo bay is an opening leading forward.

Most of the boxes, crates, and baskets are tied down and clearly marked. One group of crates is labeled wine, the baskets are marked grain, and another group of crates is labeled silks. There are also a few loose crates.

Searching the first two piles of crates (grains and wines) reveals nothing of interest. Hidden among the crates marked silks is a smaller crate marked F-R-A-G-I-B-L-E. Inside is packing material protecting six crystal vials. The vials are clearly marked: three are labeled *healing,* and the others are labeled *extra-healing.*

Most of the loose crates contain worthless material, however one is marked "Danger, do not tamper." The box has a *glyph of warding* spell on it. Setting off this trap results in a nasty electrical shock. PCs standing within 10 feet of the box suffer 25 points of temporary damage and must make a successful saving throw vs. spells or lose consciousness for 1d20 rounds. Lost hit points return at a rate of one per turn. Carefully packed away inside is a bright lime green *cloak of protection +2.*

Main Deck

Exiting from the cargo bay through the forward passageway puts the party in the companionway. Here, the PCs see a stairway leading up to the main deck on the starboard side. There is also a door across from the bottom of the stairs. There are four other doors leading off the companionway: two leading forward and two aft. Consult the map to determine which rooms the PCs enter.

Storage: Rope is kept here. Hidden among the coils of rope is an oilskin package containing a pair of *gauntlets of swimming and climbing.* PCs must actively search to find the package.

Crew Quarters: Inside are nine bunks and nine sea chests. A skeleton sits at an awkward angle on the nearest chest. The skeleton is harmless, and the chests are filled with clothes.

Officers' Quarters: Almost identical to the crew's room, the beds here are bigger and the sea chests more elaborate. The first chest opened contains a pouch with 20 gp, a normal short sword, and a silver-edged dagger. The second chest contains a dagger with a symbol that looks like butterfly wings inlaid on the pommel. As the third chest is about to be opened, a lamprey darts out from under the bed, biting at whoever is nearest the chest. It makes this one attack and then attempts to flee. Rolled up in the leg of a pair of breeches in the chest is a package containing a scroll: *protection from lycanthropy.*

Lamprey: Int Non; AL N; AC 7; MV Sw 12; HD 1+2; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; SA Suck blood for 2 hp a round; SZ L; ML 7; XP 35.

More Crew Quarters: The first door going aft off the companionway leads to a room with six bunks and sea chests. There is nothing of value in this room.

Locker: Inside are racks of cutlasses, daggers, and light crossbows. There is also a brace of harpoons and lances. If a character looks up, he sees a worn-looking short sword with a wire-wrapped hilt (*short sword +1*) hanging suspended above the racks.

Galley: There are tables and benches here to accommodate 20. There is also a cook stove, shelves, and cabinets along the starboard wall. A large post is sunk through the middle of the room from ceiling to floor; this is what's left of the main mast. All the cabinets hang open, and the room is the picture of chaos.

Empty Storage: Opening the starboard door reveals a 3' by 5' bare closet.

Captain's Room: Inside is a room with portholes port and starboard. The place is furnished with a single brass bed, a massive table and chair, a small writing desk, a wardrobe, a sea chest and an armchair. Bits of paper that might have been charts hang from the walls. A pipe collection is bolted to the wall above the small desk. There are five pipes in it, with an empty chamber meant for a sixth.

The sea chest has been overturned and emptied. The desk drawers hang out at crazy angles, and the table has been tipped on its side. The bed is torn apart. The wardrobe doors have been ripped off, and the wardrobe is empty. The armchair's cushions have been slit.

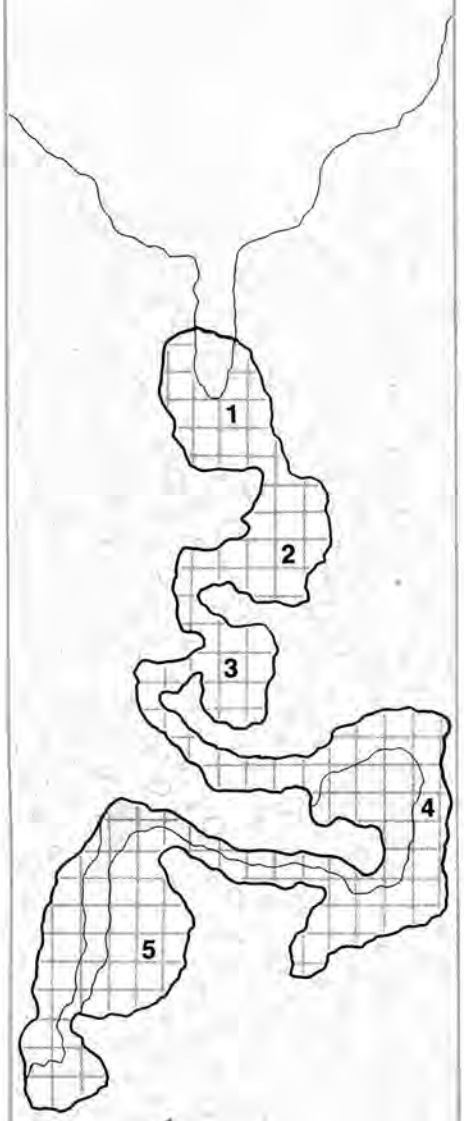
It will take diligent searching to find the treasure. Inside the bowl of one of the pipes is a prism-shaped dusty rose stone (*ioun stone, +1 protection*).

If a PC searches through the mess on the floor, he or she notices a throw rug. Underneath it is a hidden compartment containing an oilskin pouch with five sheets of vellum. Each is a scroll with one spell on it: *enlarge, feather fall, gust of wind, wizard eye,* and *Otiluke's freezing sphere.* The spells were written at 9th level.

Wereshark Lair

You have followed the canyon to its end. At the mouth of a cavern you see an opening into a cliff face about 10 feet above the sea floor.

Eye of the Leviathan



Round Two Map B

One Square = 10 Feet

Consult the numbered map as the PCs move into the cave to investigate.

1. The cavern opens into a 15-foot wide tunnel that slopes upward at a 45-degree angle. The passage dead ends, but looking up reveals light coming down, which is actually the surface of the water overhead. The tunnel leads to an air-filled cave. The walls are covered with phosphorescent fungi. Although the cave above is unoccupied, a noisy party will attract the occupant of area 2.

2. This room is occupied by one wereshark in human form, wearing black robes with a long sword belted to his waist. He is sitting at a small table playing a solitaire card game. If the PCs enter this room, he orders them to leave. He starts a fight if the PCs refuse. He fights with the sword at first, trying to force the party back to the room with the water pool. If he loses half of his hit points, he flees to the pool, dives in the water, and transforms into a shark.

The room contains three beds, a table, three chairs, a foot locker, and a small puddle of water near the south wall. Closer inspection by the puddle reveals a concealed door, which is a hinged block of rock that easily can be pushed inward. The foot locker contains 350 gold pieces and six gems worth 10 gp each. At the bottom of the foot locker is a blanket. Under it are a *potion of extra-healing,* and a scroll containing: *mirror image, invisibility,* and *wizard eye* spells.

Wereshark: Int Average; AL NE; AC 0; MV 12, Sw 21; HD 10+3; hp 60; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 5-20 (bite in shark form) or 1-8+2 long sword (and STR bonus); SD Hit only by silver, cold iron, or +1 or better magical weapons; SZ L (shark) M; ML 14; XP 2,000.

3. The concealed door leads into a corridor that turns to the east and opens into a large cavern. This otherwise empty cavern is guarded by five sahuagin. The sahuagin immediately attack.

Sahuagin (5): Int High; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12, Sw 24; HD 2+2; hp 13 each; THAC0 19; #AT 5 or special; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-4/1-4/1-4; SA Special; SD Special; SZ M; ML 12; XP 175 each.

4. This large cavern opens up on a fetid pool of water, with a passage that curves around it and dog legs back toward the east. It is occupied by a cloaker, which will first use its subsonic moan at the second of four intensities. All those within 30 feet of the cloaker must save versus spell or flee in terror for two rounds. When the cloaker is first spotted, it appears to be a normal black cloak.

Cloaker: Int High; AL CN; AC 6 (1); MV 1, Fl 15 (D); HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 13; #AT 2 + special; Dmg 1-6/1-6/ + special; SA Special; SD Special; SZ L; ML 14; XP 975.

It flies to attack the party, and any target struck is engulfed. An engulfed character suffers 1d4 points of damage, plus the character's unadjusted armor class. The cloaker uses its whip-like tail to fight anyone who attempts to rescue the victim, inflicting 1d6 points of damage per hit. Any attack on the cloaker causes half damage to the cloaker and half to the victim. The tail is AC 1 and can be cut off when 16 points of damage are inflicted.

A search of the area reveals a small alcove in the eastern wall that contains a straw sleeping mat strewn with bone fragments. PCs looking under the mat discover a small pouch containing six pearls worth 100 gp each and two potion bottles that are labeled *extra-healing.* A passage exits from the southern wall.

5. The passageway that leads to this cavern is 10 feet wide, but the western half is submerged with the same fetid water that filled the pool in room 4. The water is 10 feet deep in the passageway and deepens to 20 feet as it enters cavern 5. Although unpleasant, a PC could enter the water without harm, but would effectively be blind while submerged. The channel bisects the cavern and terminates in another large pool in the far eastern corner. The aboleth will be in this pool when the party arrives.

Also in the cavern are five humans, four sahuagin, and six koalinths—all enslaved minions of the aboleth. The humans and the koalinths are camped on the north side of the cavern, while the sahuagin are standing guard on the south side. The water can be crossed at the far eastern side of the cave where it narrows to only five feet wide. The slaves attack the PCs to defend the aboleth.

A small pile of treasure is visible on the south side near the large pool. Several sacks, weapons, coins, and two small chests can be seen. The aboleth will be aware (psionically) of any fight taking place in the cavern. It is holding the *Eye of the Leviathan* in one of its

tentacles, and has been hoping the PCs would arrive soon so it can test some of the *Eye's* powers. The aboleth waits until the PCs defeat most of its minions, then it rises out of the pool and gloats.

> "Tremble before me, puny surface dwellers! I wield the *Eye of the Leviathan,* and no power can stand before me!"

At this point, it tries to activate the *Eye.* Instantly, there is a bright blue flash as the *Eye* discharges a shock of electrical energy into the aboleth's tentacle. The aboleth suffers 20 points of damage, roars in pain, and drops the *Eye.* The party automatically wins initiative over the momentarily-stunned aboleth, and can easily grab the *Eye.*

If the PCs elect to stay and fight, the aboleth directs its remaining slaves to fight for it. The enslaved human mage casts his *sleep* spell on the PCs. At the same time, the aboleth uses its *illusion* ability to create the image of dozens more sahuagin coming to join the fray.

If the aboleth is killed, its slaves are freed. The sahuagin and koalinths continue the fight.

The treasure pile contains the following: a leather sack filled with 12,000 sp; a canvas sack containing 4,200 gp; another 100 gp and 400 sp are lying loose on the ground; a *crossbow +1*; a *broad sword +2*; a bandoleer with three *throwing daggers +1*; a chest containing a *wand of magic missiles* (22 charges); a scroll with the following spells: *unseen servant, web, blink,* and *haste*; and a *raise dead* scroll.

Men (3): Int Average; AL N; AC 4 (chain and shield); MV 9; HD 3 (F3); hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3/2 (specialized in long sword); Dmg 1-10 + 1 (STR bonus); SZ M; ML 12; XP 120 each.

Thief: Int Average; AL N; AC 0 (bracers of defense AC 4, DEX); MV 12; HD 3 (T3); hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword); SA Backstab dmg ×2; SZ M; ML 12; XP 120.

Wizard: Int Average; AL N; AC 6 (Dexterity); MV 12; HD 1 (W1); hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (staff); SZ M; ML 12; XP 35/

Spell memorized: *sleep.*

Sahuagin (4): Int High; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12, Sw 24; HD 2 + 2; hp 13 each; THAC0 16; #AT 1 or special; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-4/1-4/1-4 or trident 2-7; SA Net; SD Special; SZ M; ML 12; XP 175 each.

Koalinths (6): Int Average; AL LE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 1 + 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1-6 (spear); SZ M; ML 12; XP 35 each.

Aboleth (1): Int High; AL LE; AC 4; MV 3, Sw 18; HD 8; hp 40 (20 after trying to use the *Eye*; THAC0 12; #AT 4; Dmg 1-6 (×4); SA Psionics, enslave others, illusions; SD Slime; SZ H; ML 17; XP 2,000.

The Way Out

> As you exit the cave, passing into the sea, weighted nets fall all around you, and you are borne to the bottom by a group of humanoids with the upper bodies of men.

The PCs' captors are a group of tritons sent here to recover the *Eye of the Leviathan.* Their clerics revealed the presence of the *Eye.* They wear scale armor, and their hippocampi are waiting just around the edge of the cave mouth. To escape from the nets, a PC must make a successful bend bars/lift gates roll.

There are 15 tritons, five to a net. The tritons attack to kill if it appears the PCs are trying to run with the *Eye.*

In addition, there are 15 large hippocampi in the background. These mounts defend the tritons if it appears the PCs are winning a fight.

If the PCs do not attack the tritons, or if the tritons subdue them, the leader steps forward. He addresses the PCs in Common, explaining that he and his followers want the *Eye of the Leviathan.* He explains the history and the powers of the *Eye* and that the *Eye* was stolen.

If the party voluntarily turns over the *Eye,* the leader rewards them with a black pearl worth 10,000 gp. He calls a group of hippocampi to transport the party back to within an easy swimming distance of Ravens Bluff or the lord regent's ship.

If the PCs kill the tritons, they can take the *Eye.* Searching the bodies reveals the 10,000 gp pearl.

Tritons (14): Int High; AL N(G); AC 4; MV Sw 15; HD 3; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-7 (trident); SA Net; SD Special; MR 90%; SZ M; ML 13; XP 270 each.

Triton leader: Int High; AL N(G); AC 4; MV Sw 15; HD 8; hp 40; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-7 + 1 (trident +1); SA Net; SD Special; MR 90%; SZ M; ML 13; XP 4,000.

Hippocampi (15): Int Average; AL CG; AC 5; MV Sw 24; HD 4; hp 20 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SZ H; ML 12; XP 120 each.

Resolution

The outcome of the adventure will depend on whether the PCs killed the tritons to keep the *Eye,* or let them have the artifact. Lord Blacktree will be pleased if the PCs recovered the *Eye,* and furious if they do not have it.

The only way to placate Lord Blacktree is to give him the 10,000 gp pearl or at least 10,000 worth of magic items. If he is not satisfied, Lord Blacktree, a man with great influence and wealth, vows they will have a very hard time finding work in Ravens Bluff again.

The Eye

The Eye of the Leviathan:

Created by Istishia the Waterlord and Silvanus, the God of Nature, the *Eye* grants its possessors several powers:

1. Functions as a *rod of rulership* three times a day.

2. Mammal control at will.

3. Constant *invulnerability,* as the potion.

4. Summon and control water elementals, three times a day as a *bowl of commanding water elementals.*

5. *Hold monster* three times a day.

6. *Control weather,* as the priest spell, once a day.

7. *Water breathing* at will.

8. The *Eye* emits a psionic distress call whenever in the hands of one who is evilly aligned.

9. Inflicts a shock equivalent to a 12th level *shocking grasp* spell when activated by those of evil alignment.

If the *Eye* spends more than one month out of the water, it loses all of its magical properties.

The Living Galaxy

"No Names, Please!"—Creating NPCs For Your Adventures

by Roger E. Moore

People never cease to surprise me. They are more complex than any mathematical equation, equally capable of unbelievable heroism and unspeakable cruelty. Every human being is an adventurer in life. Everyone has somewhere to go, something to do, a story to tell. The same is true of non-player characters in role playing games.

In a science fiction role playing game, properly played NPCs often have a powerful influence on the course of a campaign. The game master interacts with the group through NPCs, and a lifeless presentation can kill a group's enthusiasm for an adventure just as quickly as clever acting can spark it.

Beyond the background life they give to campaigns, NPCs are also regularly used to introduce adventures to the group and carry the player characters through them—letting the PCs do all the dirty work, of course. Perhaps, most importantly, NPCs let the GM have a little role playing fun, too.

There are lots of ways for a GM to generate lively NPC roles, and this article looks at a few of them. I call these "no name" methods, because naming the characters is *not* particularly important—at least not at first.

In the past, I've found that naming an NPC and then developing a personality made the character static and uninteresting. The focus here, however, is on getting to know and understand these characters as people, so a GM can play them out as if he or she knew them personally. Give these techniques a try and see if they make a difference in your science fiction game.

Every Picture Tells A Story

A few months ago I went to a ballet performance. I enjoyed the show, but I also found myself attracted to the brochure that showed pictures of the performers, some with striking facial features or poses. I began making up stories about these people, and the **picture story** NPC-making method was born. To use this method, you need a stack of 3" ×5" index cards, some tape or glue, a pen or pencil, scissors, and a nice pile of unwanted magazines filled with pictures of people. Any kind of magazine will do; I recommend *National Geographic, Life, Newsweek, Ebony, Time, People, Us, TV Guide, Jet, Cosmopolitan,* clothing catalogs, and other "people-oriented" publications.

First, go through the magazines and look for faces that attract you as a GM—faces that are anything but bland. Look for faces that suggest something, that show expressions or project an image: untrustworthiness, dignity, haughtiness, intelligence, secretiveness, friendliness, anxiety, and so on. Look for faces that strongly suggest occupations as well: royalty, laborers, killers, secretaries, rakes, executives, etc.

You are picking out potential NPCs, ones who will appear in your campaign at some indefinite future time. Strive to get a broad mixture of races, sexes, ages, clothing styles, and so on; variety is an important key to this technique. Concentrate on single portraits, though couples, teams, or family groups may be selected for more variety. As a side note, I prefer to use the faces of people I don't recognize; it's easier to project personalities onto them because you aren't hampered by what you know about each person's real life. These pictures become blank slates for your imagination to draw upon.

As you find each picture, cut it out and glue or tape it to an index card, leaving room for notes next to the picture (pictures measuring about 2" square are best). Once you've got several dozen such cards, take your pen and sit back with the cards in hand. Turn on your imagination, and make up a little story in your head about each person. Ask yourself some questions to develop an idea of who each person is *without ever knowing each person's name or game statistics.* I cannot emphasize this enough: Names and game stats *do not matter yet.* Ask yourself:

- What does this person do for a living? Does this person have a secret occupation, or is she just as she seems?
- What adjectives would describe this person? What would be some of his most-used remarks? What language does he use, and does he have an accent?
- What are this person's most striking physical characteristics? Is she a sharp dresser or very plain looking? Does she appear muscular, overweight, or reed-thin? What is someone's first impression of her most likely to be?
- What would this person want from the PCs? Does he have a secret agenda in mind, or is he open and direct?
- In what ways is this person most likely to meet the PCs? Will this meeting generate a new adventure or merely add to an adventure in progress?
- What is this person's story? What world or nation is he from? What kind of life has he had, and how have events affected him? What problems and goals preoccupy him? How does he plan to solve these problems or achieve these goals—if he has any such plans at all?

As you can tell, this is a freestyle technique. You simply jot down ideas on each card as they come to you. You need not answer all the questions above, and you should always feel free to add other questions as they come to you. When you think you've got a handle on each person, fill in some notes on the person's relevant game statistics, then give the person a name. You now have a stack of almost-live NPCs.

Two examples of such cards might read as follows:

NPC #1 (from the ballet brochure I had): *Looks like a Roman emperor. Tall, noble, reserved, has dignity. Chisel-cut features, like a marble statue. Fairly athletic and strong; good pistol shot. Hard-nosed, dedicated, hard working. Short, tightly curled hair; dark skin; dark eyes. Emperor of medium-tech nation, involved in royal intrigues with other family members and conflicts with other nations on his world. Seeks merchants and adventurers who will sell him weapons and technology needed to strengthen his armies. Brave but always careful of his safety. Has extensive spy network; will have PCs bugged and followed. A master politician who works for the benefit of his nation (and his position). His army is extremely loyal and will follow his every command. Speech is very direct, even blunt.*

NPC #2 (from a car-rental ad in a news magazine): *Cheerful, open, helpful. Light brown hair, olive skin, warm eyes, wears uniform. Stewardess/passenger assistant for starport passenger line; also*

part-time spy for small but technically advanced local nation (Israel model). Active, travels a lot, hears a lot, sees a lot of men on short-term friendly basis. Her few close friends are with the passenger line as stewards and pilots; all are also with the same spy agency. Likely to meet PCs in starport, ask to help, flirt with males. May select "interesting" man for dinner date, asks lots of friendly questions without arousing suspicions (expert at making men feel good by showing them lots of interest). Will report back all unusual information and observations. Never gets seriously involved. Life story she tells is unremarkable and all fake. She is a zealot for her agency and would give her life for it; has twice lured wanted foes of her agency into capture/kidnap traps. Armed. She sounds empty-headed and fun. She's not.

You get the idea. NPCs might be met only once, once every few game weeks, or constantly over a long period of time. As you can see, the descriptions of some NPCs include notes on possible mini-adventures or complications. You might need to rewrite some NPC cards to clean them up (especially if you're like me and take messy notes), but you'll have all the relevant information on how to play them right before you start your game session. Build up a small library of these cards, fit the NPCs into your campaign, and off you go. You might pick an NPC for an off-the-cuff adventure, made up during play if you have nothing prepared beforehand. It's amazing how a simple picture can suggest so much.

The Laundry List

One of the best situations for PCs to meet lots of interesting NPCs occurs when the PCs travel aboard a passenger-carrying spacecraft that will take at least a day—and sometimes a week or more—to get to its final destination. The PCs might even operate the spacecraft themselves (a situation often seen in GDW's *Traveller* game, West End Games' *Star Wars: The RPG*, or FASA's *Star Trek: The RPG*). Imagine, then, the possibilities for drama among a group of people locked aboard a starship together for a week. Why does that dashing man never smile? What does that shifty-eyed woman have in her briefcase? Who left the enigmatic message in the cockpit? Who stole the jewels from cabin 22?

Game Masters for a number of science fiction games would benefit from having a **laundry list** of interesting NPCs, each with the potential for generating a major or minor adventure. Such NPCs need not be met aboard starships; interesting people can be found aboard planes, trains, buses, ocean liners, and hiking trails as well. The "laundry list" system is simply a list of about 20-40 characters given only the briefest details. Unless otherwise required, each NPC is assumed to have perfectly normal game statistics for their occupations (e.g., businessmen are not as strong as military soldiers, scientists tend to be smart, etc.). For my own purposes, the following information is all that's given to these "laundry list" NPCs:

- What does this person do?
- What unusual statistics or belongings (if any) does this person have?
- Why is this person traveling?
- How will this person interact with the PCs?

Shorthand notes can accompany each character. Examples of the above follow, made up at random:

Smuggler: suitcase full of live animals in hibernation; heading for buyer on another world; low key, wants no trouble.

Inspector: hidden cameras and recorders; checking out PCs' ship or vehicle for local safety violations; pleasant (records problems, then sets up an arrest, if warranted, at later date).

Marine: booze in duffle bag; heading home on leave; get drunk and have fun.

Hacker: advanced computer in briefcase; vacation from college; keeps to self, but will break into ship's computer and steal secrets, tinker with system.

Family: kids have harmless targeting pistols; long overdue vacation; parents exhausted, kids cause trouble with shoot-em-up games.

Hunter: disassembled weapons in bags; preparing for safari; friendly, tells lots of great stories, knows a lot about weapons and animals.

Prisoner and guards: guards are armed; en route to authorities on another world; guards silent, prisoner tries to convince PCs to release him as he is "unfairly held" (or so he says).

Assassin: several hard-to-find weapons in luggage; en route to mission in another country; keeps to self, bothers no one, kills anyone who gets into his luggage.

Technician: tools and manuals in bags; returning home from conference; curious about PCs' equipment.

Colonist: has reports on recently settled world; heading for new home; talkative, may give advice on his destination or former home.

Collector: small antiques in bags; on buying trip for museum on homeworld; small talk, keeps to self.

Spy/Terrorist: weapons, radical political literature concealed on person; going to investigate enemy colony prior to starting terrorist campaign there; talkative, asks about destination colony, probes for political attitudes, may bomb the PCs if their politics don't match his.

Fugitive: few possessions (left too quickly to get more); escaping from home country, where he started a failed rebellion; seems nervous, keeps to self.

Mathematician: books, books, books; on sabbatical heading for research center; no interaction at all, reads and writes all the time.

Reporter: hidden cameras and recorders; on job assignment, secretly recording how starship personnel (the PCs?) treat their customers; pleasant, asks lots of leading questions, nosy.

Security guard: actually an advanced armed robot that looks human, comes with crates full of secret materials; guarding the crates from harm during shipment; little interaction, disarms and disables anyone trying to attack "her" or the crates.

Musician: instruments, lots of money; on vacation after successful tour; looks very tired but loves card games, loud parties.

These one-shot NPCs are excellent for using as people the PCs might meet at parties, while waiting in lines at starports or riding on a hoverbus over a swamp, and so forth. GMs can use them to add detail that might catch the players off guard during an adventure (see my notes on "red herrings" in this column in POLYHEDRON® Newszine issue #83). Laundry-list NPCs add background flavor to an adventure, particularly if they have some interaction with the PCs beyond minimal levels.

Real-Life Models

Many issues ago, I recommended GMs adapt villains for their science fiction campaigns by taking real or fictional persons and modeling NPCs on them. This technique of **character modeling** works for lots of NPCs, not merely foes. If you have a particular nation in your campaign that is modeled on a real-world nation (as recommended in this column in issue #85), there's certainly

every reason to base the game nation's major NPCs on the people who lived (or still live) in that country.

For instance, a *Traveller* adventure published in 1980 (in issue #4 of GDW's *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* magazine) took place on a world named Sharmun. The planet was divided up between two mutually hostile nations: a charismatic dictatorship, led by someone named the Victor, and a Stalinist state called the Collective. It doesn't take long to figure out that the former nation was modeled on Nazi Germany and the latter on the Soviet Union, as each might have coexisted if they'd had access to atomic weapons and space travel.

If unfortunate adventurers were to land on this world and interact with its people, they might stand a chance of meeting important government officials—and these officials could easily be based on historical personages. (In the original adventure, the adventurers also stood a good chance of starting a worldwide nuclear war, but that's beside the point for now.)

Imagine, then, creating your own campaign versions of figures like Hitler, Stalin, and their respective government and military officials. You'll want to fudge with the characters so they aren't identical to their historical analogs. The charismatic dictator might be a short, bald, dumpy guy with spectacles (who gives great speeches), and the Stalin clone might be a hatchet-faced woman who always dresses in military uniforms. Books like William Shirer's *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* can provide details on the lives of those who will become NPCs in your campaign, as well as on historical events you can adopt into your game, again as per this column in issue #85.

Political and military NPCs from history, however, might be more difficult to integrate into your campaign than lesser sorts who are more accessible to the public. Bizarre, dramatic, and amusing adventurers can be constructed around your campaign's versions of people like those featured in John Michell's book, *Eccentric Lives & Peculiar Notions*. This is a highly entertaining account of some of the strangest people of the past few centuries. You'll read about a genealogist who believed he was the descendant of King Arthur, a mad scientist who tried unsuccessfully to win World War II using aircraft carriers made from icebergs, a poet who decided he was the last of the druids, a genteel woman who believed the world was governed by a dangerous secret society, crazed bibliophiles who would starve in order to steal more books for their collections, and a small army of people who believed the Earth was either flat, hollow, or being invaded by UFOs.

Every one of these people would be perfect as an offbeat NPC encountered during the course of a normal adventure. One of the crazed bibliophiles, for example, might have the key to solving a mystery (or a hundred mysteries) stashed away in his book-filled home, or the mad scientist might enlist the PCs' help in one of his nutty schemes.

If you are running a law-and-order campaign in which the PCs are interstellar police officers, you'll need to develop lots of criminals—and a book like *Most Wanted: A History of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List* would come in handy. Written by Mark Sabljak and Martin H. Greenberg, this volume gives lots of interesting notes on some of the worst criminals in modern American history. Photographs of each person are also shown, which makes this reference useful for the "picture" technique given earlier. You might also look for a library copy of *The Oxford Book of Villains*, edited by John Mortimer, which features more than 400 pages of real and fictional evildoers, including master crooks, minor thieves, murderers, con artists, clever spies, and cruel tyrants. (See this column in issue #57 for more details on making opponents for science fiction role playing games.)

If you use this character-modeling technique, be sure to add important role playing details: How does this person speak? What are her goals? What are his secrets? What will this NPC want from the PCs? Your NPCs should not be exactly like the people they are modeled on, so you can introduce whatever details you like to make your role playing of them easier and more natural for you. If you can, find a picture in a magazine or newspaper that matches your conception of each NPC, then attach it to that NPC's game-stats card. I wouldn't use a picture of the person serving as the model, however; pick a photo that matches your *campaign* version of the model.

As always, news and current events make great sources of NPCs. Pick up your newspaper or news magazine and see if any particular individuals seem worthy of duplication. Focus on the sorts of people that your group's PCs are likely to meet during the course of their adventures, particularly as adventure patrons. You'll get a large number of criminals, of course, as they are always newsworthy. However, city politicians, law-enforcement officers, businessmen, civic leaders, and others might wish to interview, question, investigate, hire, or capture the PCs for various important reasons.

As always, look for the people who stand out above the crowd, ones who offer interesting avenues for role playing. You might see if your players are able to figure out the models on which your NPCs are based, though you shouldn't go out of your way to make such an identification too obvious. Still, it would be interesting to see how the PCs react to meeting game versions of famous and infamous historical figures like Edward Teller (in the game, a scientist who turns against his own weapons project), Josef Mengele (a monstrous war criminal hiding from justice), Sir Francis Drake (a heroic admiral and part-time buccaneer), Ted Bundy (a charming serial killer), Fidel Castro (an unknown revolutionary preparing for war), Nat Turner (a slave who leads an uprising), General George A. Custer (an egotistical military officer about to have some bad luck), Elliot Ness (an "untouchable" police commander), and Typhoid Mary (a plague carrier who refuses to be quarantined). TSR's GAMMA WORLD® game has a mutant bear that acts like Napoleon Bonaparte. Almost anything's possible.

Not-So-Real-Life Models

Science fiction novels and stories offer hundreds of memorable characters for potential adoption into science fiction campaigns. Donal Graeme, the ultimate Dorsai of Gordon R. Dickson's military series, would make a remarkable general with psionic talents. Keith Laumer's Jame Retief would be the perfect model for a "hands on" diplomat. A scientist-turned-feudal lord derived from Ursula K. LeGuin's Rocannon might appear on a low-tech world. But why stick to humans only, when there are aliens and robots galore to copy? (Put HAL 9000 in your PCs' starship? Sure!)

When skimming through fiction sources, don't overlook characters who are not in the science fiction genre or are only marginally so. With a few creative adjustments, you can have your own science fiction version of Doc Sav-

age, Conan, James Bond, Sherlock Holmes, Cyrano de Bergerac, Rambo, King Arthur, Dirty Harry, Mad Max, Gandalf (psionic, of course), or Tarzan of the Apes. The hilarious troublemakers found in many of the stories by Saki (English writer H. H. Munro) would give PCs fits.

As with the real-life models noted earlier, you might be interested in seeing if the players can identify the characters on which your own NPCs are based. If the adventurers land on a deserted planet but discover a "shipwrecked" family there, would the PCs recognize the Swiss Family Robinson? Or maybe that would be the Robinson family of the "Lost in Space" TV show from the 1960s, depending on the version you are most familiar with. Will the PCs know the vengeful captain (and scientific genius) who conducts a private war with a destructive space corporation as Captain Nemo? Will they figure out the "true" identity of Robin Hood and his merry band of outlaws? Only your campaign (and the players' cleverness) will tell.

As was pointed out earlier, try not to have NPCs look *too* obviously derived from another source. Luke Skywalker, Obi Won Kenobi, and Darth Vader will need considerable revision if they are to appear in your campaign (unless, of course, you play the *Star Wars* game). Go for the unexpected, the less obvious, the refreshingly new or different twist. If your version of Robin Hood wears Lincoln green and uses a bow, that's a little much. If he wears a business suit and is a corporate computer pirate who steals from the rich and gives to the poor, with a merry band of hackers in his league, that's much better.

Let's Get Clinical

For years, psychologists have been sorting people into different categories according to their personalities, though few psychologists agree on what aspects of personality are most important. Two books by psychologists have struck me as particularly useful for role playing purposes, and these are described here with notes on how to use them in creating interesting (though often obnoxious) NPCs.

One very useful book is a thick one that may put you off at first glance. It's the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition*, otherwise known as the DSM-III, written by the American Psychiatric Association (a more recent edition is probably out by now). This book, which I used when I was a mental-health counselor for the U.S. Army, gives detailed descriptions of various sorts of mental conditions that would be extremely useful in portraying NPCs in your campaign. In reasonably clear terms, the book offers you a picture of conditions such as psychoses, mental retardation, sleepwalking, substance abuse, depression, phobias, neuroses, panic disorders, kleptomania, pyromania, post-traumatic stress syndrome, amnesia, hallucinations, brain injuries, and that famous but little-understood disorder called multiple personality. Certain personality types are also described, though this volume focuses on "problem personalities" such as paranoids, sociopaths, compulsives, and those irritating passive-aggressive types.

Applying these to NPCs is not difficult. A lady NPC aboard the PCs' passenger starship might sleepwalk around the ship, leading to all sorts of amusing and chaotic situations. A paranoid businessman might cause enormous grief for the PCs with his wild accusations against them. The NPC ship's engineer might turn out to have remarkable compulsive traits, sorting and ordering everything in the ship and going on cleaning binges. A pilot might have a panic disorder, or a stewardess might display severe kleptomania, resulting in the disappearance of many small items from people's cabins. The antisocial types (i.e., sociopaths) will appear among many criminal elements the PCs meet, and they'll be especially dangerous and difficult to handle.

The other good personality book is *Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types*, by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates. This book proposes that there are 16 basic personality types, which have different ratings across four scales for introversion vs. extraversion, thinking vs. feeling, and so on. Without going into great detail, you may find this work to be quite fascinating. It even includes a test you can use on yourself. Each of the 16 types, say the authors, tends toward a certain set of occupations. For example, ENFJs (extraverted intuitive feeling judgmental sorts) often become great teachers, executives, therapists, and salespeople, though they made terrible accountants; ISTPs (introverted sensuous thinking perceiving sorts) seek mastery of tools (usually vehicles or weapons), and thus become great pilots, soldiers, spies, cops, and assassins. Your author is an ENFJ, by the way, and can barely balance his own checkbook.

Please Understand Me is not very expensive, and I strongly recommend buying your own copy if you are serious about character development in your games. (Besides, the test is fun and will spark all sorts of arguments with your friends and family members if you make them take it, too.) I developed a remarkable handle on how other people think after reading this book a few times, and long-term NPCs will benefit greatly from a few notes derived from its pages. Think about an INTP mad scientist, for instance, or an ESTP businesswoman looking for a ship's crew for a new and risky merchant run.

Other NPC Resources

This column has covered a number of ways to develop characters for science fiction role playing games, and any of these methods will work fine for developing memorable NPCs, too. Issue #83 discussed the use of retired PCs as NPCs, simply renaming the characters involved and fiddling a bit with their belongings and descriptions. Issue #70 mentioned borrowing personality types from other role playing games, which is an especially good system for NPC development if you use the character templates from West End Games' *Star Wars* or FASA's *MechWarrior* games. Finally, issue #63 talked about developing PCs with flaws, which is a good way to "pop up" the long-term NPCs in a campaign. Give an NPC a problem, and soon it will be the PCs' problem, too.

I owe special thanks to Dave Nilsen of GDW for a copy of "Salvage on Sharmun" (which our group called "Please Don't Squeeze the Sharmun"), to Vince and Karen Streif for the book on eccentric people, and to Gail Levine, who talked me into going to the ballet and thus triggered this entire article.

The Fun Proficiency

Add A New Skill To Your Bag Of Gaming Tricks

by Kevin Melka

Why do we gather at conventions on weekends? Why do we play through all hours of the day and into the night? Is it because our parents or spouses force us? Is it because we might win great prizes? Is it because we enjoy the agony of putting our bodies through limitless hours of little sleep and cheap junk food? No. We do it (at least most of us do it) to have fun, to enjoy the thrill of the gaming adventure, the excitement of the action-packed tournament that holds our attention and gives us amusement for hours on end.

The GEN CON® Game Fair

My partner in crime, Keith Polster, and I produce the RATS tournament that runs each year at the Game Fair. (This year's offering was Rats In Space.)

As I walked through the RPGA® Network gaming area I saw a diversity of gamers engaged in many of the tournaments that were offered. I found myself listening to strange conversations.

Moving through the corridors on my way to wherever I had to be the next slot, I consistently overheard things that made me pause and wonder. What I seemed to hear more than ever was players, both Network members and non-members, constantly complaining. The complaints seemed trivial to me.

Things like."...my character died in the first hour!" or "...I got stuck with a bunch of younger gamers and it really ruined it for the rest of us!" were just some of the conversations I heard. Sure problems occur—at the Game Fair or any convention. Disagreements happen, and on occasion frustrated players storm out of the gaming area.

There's only one thing I have to say to these people.

Relax.

It's only a game.

Discover the Fun Proficiency.

Now you may ask yourself, "What in the world is the Fun Proficiency?" Simply put, it's a skill developed by those of us who have been around awhile and who know when to take the game seriously, and when to tell yourself "Hey, mellow out, it's only a game. Have a good time." Adventures come and go, characters live and die, memories of conventions eventually fade to black. But the one thing that should always happen is you should have fun with role playing games.

The Rules

As with any proficiency or skill, there are rules regarding the Fun Proficiency that must be followed so you can get the most out of any gaming experience. This is only an outline of the rules; feel free to add or subtract as you see fit.

Rule #1: Be Patient

There will always be people who know more about the game than you.

Think back to a time when you were first introduced to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game or the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, a time when you didn't have the hit dice of an ogre or the damage of a war-hammer memorized.

More than likely it was a time when you were a bit younger than the other more experienced players. And I would hope that those players helped you out and were patient with mistakes you made and problems you encountered.

So don't complain about younger gamers now. Be patient like others were to you. With time, these younger gamers will be as cunning and creative as those they learned from.

Rule #2: Relax

If there is another constant in the universe of gamers, it is that a four-day convention can be a nerve-racking, hectic, crazy, insane, riotous, sprinting, Mecca-hot-dog-induced nightmare.

Take a step back, breathe deeply, order Chinese carry-out, and relax before you do something or say something that you probably will regret later.

Although the same rules apply for a two-day convention, the absence of Mecca food will greatly relieve a build-up of tension.

Rule #3: Don't Worry, Have Fun

You got involved with role playing games for a reason—whether it was to meet people or have an exciting hobby. But the bottom line is you got into gaming to have fun. I don't think people 15 years ago picked up a D&D® game boxed set, took one look at *Keep of the Borderlands,* and said "I think I'll study this game so years from now I can drop dead from a heart attack while arguing over the area of effect of a *fireball!*"

Life is too short to develop an ulcer over a 20-pound stack of game rule books and a few hundred dice. It is, after all, only a game.

Rule #4: Balance

The key to a good gaming session is roughly 50 percent the DM™, 50 percent the scenario. If you have a good DM and a bad scenario, the two should even out. However, if you have a bad DM and either a good or bad scenario, you tend not to have a good time.

Now there are times when you cannot avoid a "bad" DM, particularly at large conventions. When this happens, players who have the Fun Proficiency know to do the following: *If the DM stinks and/or the scenario stinks, then it is up to the players to make the adventure enjoyable for all present.*

Many a time myself or someone I knew sat down with a scenario that could double as toilet paper. But with a little creativity on the DM's part the game can be made lively and enjoyable without changing the contents of the adventure.

On the other hand, I also witnessed young or inexperienced DMs go down in flames because a group of experienced players argued over every encounter or rule.

Remember to exercise a little balance and keep the arguing to a minimum. If all the people at the table can enjoy themselves, then everyone has a good time.

Kevin and Keith's Optional Rules For The Fun Proficiency and Network Tournaments

A decade ago I wrote my name on a small slip of paper in a local hobby shop that said, "Sign here for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Club." Little did I know what would happen.

In the club I met Keith Polster, a kind and gentle human being who not only introduced me to the finer points of gaming, but was a benevolent teacher.

Keith and I have developed several rules through the years that have kept us and those whom we game with from becoming babbling idiots. Once again, some of these rules might not be suitable for all gamers—especially minors.

Optional Rule A: Preparing For A Fun Day At The Convention

There are several sub-rules governing this optional rule, each are listed in chronological order.

1. Get an early start for a day of fun, unless you're suffering from a hangover due to overindulgence the night before. In this case, drag yourself out of bed late, show up at your gaming table with two minutes to spare, and boldly state to your players that if they don't play to the best of their ability, you'll cry. (Just kidding. Always make sure you're there plenty early.)

2. Do not eat convention-site food. Nuff said. (I'm not kidding.)

3. After a long and **fun** day of gaming, get to bed early only if you have to be up early the next morning. Otherwise, stay up late at the nearest watering hole and chat about the day's events until a few hours before you must awake the next morning and do it all over again.

Optional Rule B: Cheer For The Monsters

When the bad guys surprise a member of the party, cheer.....HOORAY! When the DM rolls a natural "20" against one of your fellow PCs.....cheer HOORAY! When someone does something *very* stupid and then gets what they deserve-.....cheer HOORAY! When your character dies a cruel, horrible, agonizing death.....cheer HOORAY!

Optional Rule C: Die and Die Again

I challenge any gamer to show me the written rule that says "Thou must die, or cause the death of a player character, in an RPGA Network event. Many years ago I DMed a group of players in a round of a long-forgotten Network tournament. During the course of the four-hour time slot I killed all but two of the PCs. After receiving numerous thanks for an excellent time by all of the participants, I was shocked to see that each of them had given me a perfect score.

Optional Rule D: Don't Make The DUNGEON MASTER™ Angry

Several years ago as I walked around during an open slot I found myself watching an event run by Keith Polster. Though I don't recall the scenario, the one thing that really stuck in my mind was the gentleman with a wizard PC in one hand and a calculator in the other.

Every time this player wanted his character to do something, or should I say anything, he would pull out his calculator and use it to figure out exact distances and areas of effect. Although some might not considers his actions wrong, the calculator-shtick became a headache for Keith and the players who wanted to move the game along.

After watching this person attempt to correct Keith several times in the first hour of play, I wandered away because I thought things were going to get ugly. Fast.

Several minutes later a resounding cheer rose up from the cubical—I learned the wizard met an untimely death. A sub-rule to this optional rule is: no one should ever bring a calculator to a Network event.

Optional Rule E: We Don't Need No Stinking Points

I've been a Network member for almost 10 years now, and there is one thing I have to say about player and judge points—who cares? Granted, I recognize the need for points to separate novice, Master, and Grand Master players and judges, but I cannot understand those who live and die by how many points they can pile up over the course of a lifetime.

Personally, basing how much fun you have on how many points you can attain takes the **fun** out of the game. I know several individuals who could care less how many points they have. To them their level listing is just something they read once a year when headquarters mails their membership card.

Sure, points and levels are important to Network gaming—but they're not THAT important.

Optional Rule F: Be Prepared

More than once I've come to a gaming session where I was the only one there with a pencil, graph paper, and a *Player's Handbook*. Sure, people forget things, and they misplace or lose their stuff, but too much time gets wasted when out of an arena full of people only three have writing utensils.

Remember that when you're playing a Network event you have less than four hours to finish the scenario, and you would be surprised what a few minutes here and there can waste while you borrow supplies.

Optional Rule G: Thank Those Who Are Involved

In the past few years I've seen what it takes to organize a convention—whether it be the GEN CON Game Fair or something a little smaller. Let me tell you it's no trivial affair.

If you've properly used the Fun Proficiency and had a wonderful time at the convention, take a minute to thank your judge, tournament coordinator, and even those people at headquarters who tallied up your totals and posted the winners. If it wasn't for these people the Fun Proficiency would have no hope.

In Conclusion

The Network has come a long way in the past decade. If you like what the RPGA Network has done in the past and are a devoted convention attendee, then more power to you.

However, if you think some things could improve, don't sit there and complain—either help to make the organization better or keep your mouth closed.

I can't begin to count the number of times I've heard, "I can write a better tournament than that one" or "I can do a better job than the DM we just had."

My only reply is who's stopping you?

For those of you who agree with my rules for the Fun Proficiency, I sure hope to get you in one of my groups at a convention this coming year. ❑

Bartering Made Easy

Optional Rules For The DARK SUN® Setting

by Bill Slavicsek

The following is excerpted from the Elves of Athas, a DARK SUN® *accessory to be released in November. These rules can be adjusted to fit any* AD&D® *game setting.*

Elves are master bargainers, skilled in the arts of deception, flattery and haggling. The rules for simple and protracted bartering presented on page 49 of the DARK SUN Rules Book work very well in most role playing game situations. However, when the thrust of an encounter is a bartering session, you might want to try these optional bartering rules instead. They help visualize the give and take between two haggling parties and incorporate some new rules which reflect the edge Athasian elves should have when it comes to bargaining.

As in the protracted barter system, the Charisma scores of the parties involved must be known. The DM™ sets a marker (a die will do nicely) on the True Value space on the Optional Barter Table. This represents the true market value of the item in question. True market value can change, depending on location, supply and demand, and a host of other factors, so the true value of an item can be higher or lower on any given day. Now as many as three rounds of haggling ensue, following the rules as outlined below.

Haggling Round One, Role Playing

One character makes an offer on the item in question. It does not matter who makes the first move in a session of haggling. Either the merchant (item owner) or customer (item buyer) can make the opening offer. The other character then makes a counter offer, thus establishing the haggling parameters.

Round One, Role Playing Example: "I know you want this well-crafted elven sword," the elf merchant declares. "Look at the workmanship in the bone, the loving attention to detail. You'll be stealing it from me at 90 silver."

"It seems like you're the one doing the stealing, my friend," replies the warrior cheerfully. "Look at the chips along the cutting edge, and that extra gouge in the pommel. I couldn't part with more than 30."

Haggling Round One, Game Mechanics: The DM decides the true market value of the item and sets a die (or other marker) on the True Value space on the Optional Barter Table. If one of the participants is an elf, the DM checks for any applicable bonuses on the Elf Charisma Bonus Table. These bonuses adjust the starting position of the marker toward or away from the elf character's desired goal (either the Offer or Counter Offer end of the Barter Table). It has no effect after the first round.

Optional Barter Table

OPENING COUNTER OFFER
90%*
75%*
60%*
50%*
40%*
25%*
10%*
TRUE VALUE
10%**
25%**
40%**
50%**
60%**
75%**
90%**
OPENING OFFER

* of Opening Counter Offer, higher or lower than the True Value. Owners tend toward the higher scale, customers toward the lower.

** of Opening Offer, higher or lower than the True Value. Owners tend toward the higher scale, customers toward the lower.

Barter Rules Difference Table

Difference Between Die Rolls	Move Item Marker
13-16	6 Spaces
9-12	5 Spaces
7-8	4 Spaces
4-6	3 Spaces
2-3	2 Spaces
1	1 Space
0	No Spaces

Elf Charisma Bonus Table*

Charisma Score	Bonus
19-20	+4 Spaces
17-18	+3 Spaces
15-16	+2 Spaces
13-14	+1 Space
9-12	No Bonus
7-8	+1 Space
5-6	+2 Spaces

* Adjusts the starting position of the item marker when an elf is trading with a non-elf, or when an elf trader is dealing with an elf of another class.

If either side feels that the other's offer is too outrageous, then the bartering session can be halted before any dice are thrown. However, once the actual session begins with the first toss of the dice, then both sides are bound to accept the terms decided by the subsequent bartering.

Participating characters with the Bargain proficiency make proficiency checks. If their checks are successful, they get to roll 3d6 and add the result to their Charisma scores. All others roll 2d6 plus Charisma. The winner (the character with the higher total) moves the item marker the number of spaces listed on the Difference Table toward his end of the Barter Table.

Either side can end the negotiations now, but both sides must abide by the item's price as determined by the first round of haggling.

Note that the item marker can never advance beyond the Opening Offers, no matter how many spaces the Difference Table says to move it. In this way, a merchant can never receive more than he asked for, and a customer can never pay less than he offered.

Round One, Game Mechanics Example: The DM determines that a bone long sword's true value, according to the current market, is 40 sp. He sets the item marker on the True Value space on the Barter Table.

The elf merchant has a Charisma score of 14. According to the Elf Charisma Bonus Table, this gives the elf a slight edge in the negotiations. To reflect this, the DM moves the item marker one space toward the elf's end of the Barter Table. It starts at the item's true value plus 10% of the Opening Offer price.

Now the elf makes a proficiency check for her Bargain proficiency. She needs to roll a 12 or less. She rolls a 5, granting her an extra die in the haggling roll to come.

The elf rolls 3d6 for a total of 12, which she adds to her Charisma score: 12 + 14 = 26. The warrior rolls only 2d6 (no Bargain proficiency) for a total of 4. He adds this to his Charisma score of 16: 4 + 16 = 20. The elf wins. The DM looks up the difference in the totals on the Difference Table (26 + 20 = 6) and moves the item marker the number of spaces it directs (3 spaces) toward the elf's end of the Barter Table. At the end of the first round of haggling, the sword's price has been negotiated up to the true value plus 50% of the elf's opening offer. This is calculated by determining how much greater the opening offer is than the true value (90 − 40 = 50), taking 50% of that number (25 sp), and adding it to the true value. This places the negotiated price of the sword at 65 sp (40 + 25 = 65).

The bargaining continues.

Haggling Round Two, Role Playing

The character who made the opening offer in the first round of haggling makes a new offer based on what occurred. The other character then makes a new counter offer.

Round Two, Role Playing Example: "You must take me for a near-sighted dwarf, good sir," the elf merchant says, giving the warrior her most disarming smile. "Because I have a fondness for humans, especially male humans, I'll let you have this priceless weapon for only 60 pieces of silver."

"And you must take me for a thrikreen who doesn't know the value of currency," the warrior laughs back. "I could probably find as many as 35 silver pieces in my pouches if I look hard enough."

Haggling Round Two, Game Mechanics

Characters with the Bargain proficiency can make checks to gain an extra die. All other characters roll 2d6 and add their totals to their Charisma scores. The winner calculates how much he won the roll by and checks on the Difference Table to determine how many spaces the item marker moves in his favor.

Either participant can end negotiations now, but the current price of the item being haggled over is binding to both sides.

Round Two, Game Mechanics Example: The item marker starts this round on the 50% space of the Opening Offer side of the Barter Table, as was determined by the first round of haggling. So far, things have been going in the elf merchant's favor. She makes a new check to see if her Bargain proficiency continues to help her. She rolls a 17—too high! No extra die for the elf this round.

The elf rolls a 6 on 2d6. Added to her Charisma score, this gives her a total of 20 (6 + 14 = 20). The warrior rolls 12 on 2d6, for a total of 28 (12 + 16 = 28). The warrior wins this round, rolling 8 better than the elf. On the Difference Table, an 8 means the marker moves 4 spaces in the winner's favor. This slides the marker back down to the True Value space. If negotiations were to end now, the warrior would be able to purchase the sword for 40 sp.

Both sides agree to continue haggling.

Haggling Round Three, Role Playing

As in the previous round, the character who made the opening offer makes a new offer based on what has occurred so far. The other character then makes a new counter offer.

Round Three, Role Playing Example: "You are as shrewd a negotiator as you are powerful a fighter, my well-built friend," the elf merchant whispers as she presses close to the warrior. "What I wouldn't give to have someone like you guarding my fine wares. Because I have grown to like you, I'll let you have this exquisite weapon for only 45 silver pieces. What do you say?"

"You flatter me with your fine words, but wound me with your lofty prices," the warrior scowls. "I would love to take that less than perfect sword out of your more than perfect hands, but I simply cannot afford to pay more than 37 pieces of silver."

Haggling Round Three, Game Mechanics

Characters with the Bargain proficiency can make checks to gain an extra die. All other characters roll 2d6 and add their totals to their Charisma scores. The winner calculates how much he won the roll by and checks on the Difference Table to determine how many spaces the item marker moves in his favor.

Negotiations end after this round, setting the final price on the item in question. This final price is binding to both sides.

Round Three, Game Mechanics Example: The item marker starts this round on the True Value space, as was determined by the second round of haggling. The elf makes a final Bargain proficiency check. She rolls a 15, once again failing to make use of her skill.

Now the final haggling rolls are made. The elf rolls a 10 on 2d6 for a total of 24 (10 + 14 = 24). The charismatic warrior rolls a 9 on 2d6 for a total of 25 (9 + 16 = 25). The warrior wins by one, which the Difference Table shows as a 1 space move in the warrior's favor. Negotiations end with the sword priced at the true value of the sword minus 10% of the difference of the warrior's opening offer (40 − 30 = 10 sp; 10 ÷ 10 = 1; 40 − 1 = 39 sp). Both parties are bound to abide by this price.

Final Words

"You drive a hard bargain, warrior," the elf merchant declares. "Because I like you, I'll give you the sword for 42 silver."

The warrior smiles. "And because I like you, I'll give you 39 pieces of silver—and not a ceramic more. Take it or leave it."

"Very well, 39 silver pieces it is," the elf sighs. "Just don't tell anyone how badly you robbed me."

Into The Dark

Low-Budget Wizardry

by James Lowder

Like just about everything else in American or European sword & sorcery films, the depiction of magic tends to be quite shoddy. The reason for this is simple: cut-rate producers love these films because they can be staged cheaply. Give a couple of beefy guys swords and loincloths, plaster a fake wizard beard on somebody, and find a young woman willing to wear a costume made up of two ashtrays and a small length of chain. "Actors? We don't need no stinkin' actors!"

Unsurprisingly, these low-budget sword & sorcery productions don't lavish lots of money on dazzling special effects. Most of the screen sorcery is accomplished through editing or low-tech techniques. The resulting scenes are often pretty dismal.

This isn't to say that a big budget will necessarily make a sword & sorcery film worthwhile. I'd gladly watch *The Barbarians* before sitting through *Willow.* And *Dragonslayer,* the first film reviewed this month, is as dreary in places as any of its bargain basement genre-mates. It's a dearth of creativity that cripples most English-language fantasy flicks, and that's one commodity you can't purchase at any price.

As always, the films reviewed here are rated as follows:

You can't get any better	*****
Entertaining and enjoyable	****
There are worse films	***
Wait for cable	**
A waste of good tape	*

Dragonslayer

1981, 110 Minutes
Paramount
Director: Matthew Robbins
Cast: Peter MacNicol, Caitlin Clarke, Sir Ralph Richardson
*****1/2**

Dragonslayer tells a rather cliched coming-of-age story, wherein a mage's apprentice named Galen (Peter MacNicol) earns the powers of a master sorcerer. Just the sort of tale you'd expect in a movie co-produced by Disney.

A delegation from Urland comes to the great wizard Ulrich (Ralph Richardson) and begs him to destroy the dragon terrorizing their land. Not only is the beast a generally nasty sort, but Urland's monarch, Casiodorus Rex, has cut a deal with the wyrm. At the spring and autumn equinox, a virgin woman is chosen by lottery and offered up as dragon chow. This keeps the dragon happy, but Urland's young women (and their parents) are understandably opposed to the lottery.

Ulrich agrees to help, but is apparently killed by Tyrian, the king's nastiest minion. Enter Galen. The wizard's apprentice uncovers a mystical amulet, then decides to take up the Urlander's cause. He swaggers off to confront the dragon, Vertithrax, only to create lots of strife for everyone by annoying the wyrm rather than killing it outright.

In true fairy tale fashion, Galen learns that he's too proud of his meager skills and too pompous to be a true wizard. This humility allows him to become a hero, of course, leading up to a final confrontation with the wyrm. There's a love interest, of course, in the person of Valerian, a blacksmith's daughter who dresses as a boy to avoid the lottery. We get all the standard themes of upscale fantasy, too: the opposition of religion and magic, the cowardice of authority, and so on.

There are two major problems with *Dragonslayer,* both of which hobble the film. The first involves the characters. As Galen, Peter MacNicol is unconvincing and annoying. Caitlin Clarke's Valerian isn't a whole lot better, though her character's gruff exterior puts her miles ahead of most sword & sorcery bimbos. The rest of the cast is uniformly excellent, most especially Sir Ralph Richardson as the doddering wizard (he would play a brilliant Elminster, for you Realms fans), and John Hallam as the nefarious Tyrian. The supporting cast can't make up for the dull leads, though, which makes it tough to care if the dragon eats them or not.

This weakness is magnified by the film's slack pacing. If Galen was an interesting lead, watching his slow growth as a hero would be interesting. Unfortunately, sitting through *Dragonslayer*'s nearly two hours seems more like spending a week in the Cleveland bus terminal. (Those of you who've avoided that experience can read Dante's *Inferno.*)

Fortunately, *Dragonslayer* boasts one incredible asset: great special effects by ILM. After an hour and a half of revealing only glimpses of the wyrm, we're treated to a stupendous—though sadly brief—battle between Galen and the dragon. Created through a mixture of stop-motion and computer enhancement, Vertithrax remains one of the most frightening beasties ever to rumble onto the screen.

It's worth making the slow trudge through the rest of the film to reach the final slug-fests, but more to marvel at the dragon and the convincing sorcery effects than to witness the heroes' triumph.

The Warrior and the Sorceress

1984, 81 Minutes
New Horizon/Vestron
Director: John Broderick
Cast: David Carradine, Luke Askew, Maria Socas
******

Oh boy. Yet another film to rip off Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo.* Hey, it worked when Sergio Leone mutated the samurai story into a western for Clint Eastwood (*A Fistful of Dollars*), why not as a sword & sorcery flick starring David Carradine?

Yeah, the answer seems obvious to me, too.

The village of Yam-A-Tar is being torn apart by a feud between rival warlords. The villainous Zeg and the bloated, corrupt Bal Caz spend their time battling over the village well, the key to life on the desolate, desertlike planet of Ura. Only the arrival of wandering holy warrior named Kain (David Carradine) saves the beleaguered locals.

After assessing the situation, Kain sets about destroying the rival warlords by forcing them into bloody conflicts with each other. He first helps one side, then the other, slaughter the opposing force, hoping that they'll simply wipe themselves out before too long. It's all

pilfered pretty directly from *Yojimbo,* though director Broderick is no Kurosawa, and Carradine is no Toshiro Mifune.

The sword & sorcery elements grafted on to the original center mostly on the priestess Naja (the sorceress of the title), who Kain hopes to rescue from Zeg's clutches before the baddie can force her to create a magical sword. The priestess doesn't do much magic in the film—in fact she mostly just runs around in a really skimpy costume.

Tack on some lizard men slavers, a battle against a silly tentacled monster with asthma, and tedious, badly choreographed fight scenes and you've got *The Warrior and the Sorceress.* If you feel tempted to rent this one, check out the original Japanese film instead. Or watch them back-to-back to see just how much Broderick swiped. It just goes to prove that wearing a fake beard and a stovepipe hat won't make you Abe Lincoln.

Lionman II: The Witchqueen

1983, 95 Minutes
Akmanfilm/Boomerang
Director: Michael Arslan
Cast: Frank Morgan, Erich Akman, Dee Taylor, Crystal Williams
*

I wondered why anyone would put up money to create a howler like this—until I noticed that the producer is also the film's lead villain! The lengths some people will go to just to get on the screen.

For those of you who missed the first Lionman flick, have no fear, we get a lengthy (and silly) flashback explaining the hero's origin and the plot of Lionman I. When his father the king is killed, the orphaned child is left in the forest where he is taken in and raised by, you guessed it, lions! He grows up to becoming a great warrior (who fights with spiked boxing gloves) and proceeds to win back the throne of Thracia from the usurper, Antoine.

Antoine's brother, Belisaurius (Erich Akman), is the villain for *Lionman II.* He joins forces with the evil sorceress Rheasilvia to kill Lionman and his three cohorts: Chimp (the agile guy), Foxy (the mute guy), and Angel (the hulking strong guy). The baddies kidnap Lionman's son and his sort-of love interest, the bubbleheaded Princess Tania. As you'd expect, the hero tracks the villains down and storms their hideout.

As Lionman, Frank Morgan shows about as much emotion as a fencepost. The dubbed dialogue in this Turkish-American production doesn't help this paucity of acting talent either. Moreover, the endless scenes of Lionman running through the exciting Turkish landscape are enough to put a hyperactive mongoose into a coma.

Surprisingly, though, there are a few things the recommend *Lionman II* to die-hard sword & sorcery fans. Dee Taylor does a good job as the witchqueen Rheasilvia, despite the ridiculously unfunctional skimpy costume. The fight scenes are creative and acrobatic, though filmed badly, and the final half hour contains a couple of clever and original bits—including a really bizarre scene where the heroes' horses suddenly shrink out from under them!

Despite an arrow through the throat, the villain Belisarius will likely be back for the threatened sequel, *Lionman III: Ring of the Magus.* Ah, the advantages of having the producer's ear....

Deathstalker III: The Warriors from Hell

1988, 85 Minutes
New Classics/Concorde
Director: Alfonso Corona
Cast: John Allen Nelson, Carla Herd, Thom Christopher
**

These Deathstalker films just get better and better, don't they? After the revolting *Deathstalker I,* though, that hasn't been too difficult.

Following in the footsteps of Richard Hill and John Terlesky, soap opera star John Allen Nelson (from *Santa Barbara*) takes on the role of Deathstalker for this installment of the seemingly endless fantasy series. He is quite good in the role, finally granting the hero some swashbuckling nobility and general charisma.

This time around Deathstalker faces the evil wizard Troxartis (Thom Christopher), battling for the life of a princess and the three mystical jewels that form the key to the lost treasure city of Erendor. Though Troxartis strikes me more as a greedy accountant or mad civil servant than a powerful sorcerer, his twisted, sex-starved assistant Camisarde (Terri Treas) leads some credibility to the bad guy's camp.

The humor is lame, the macho sexual posturing annoying, and the editing totally incompetent. Yet *Deathstalker III* manages to remain somewhat entertaining. John Allen Nelson and Terri Treas deserve much of the credit for dragging the film above its weaknesses, but alone they can't make this much more than a tolerable use of blank videocassettes.

Sorceress

1982, 83 Minutes
New World/Thorn
Director: Brian Stuart
Cast: Leigh Harris, Lynette Harris, Bob Nelson, Robert Ballesteros
**

Once you realize that *Sorceress* sports a script by Jim Wynorski, the same hack who brought us the sophomoric *Deathstalker II,* you'll have a good idea about what to expect from this one.

Leigh and Lynette Harris play Mara and Mira, twin warriors who are disguised as boys so that their father, the villainous Traigon, won't find them and sacrifice them to his god. The girls' supposed ignorance of sex and their telepathic link that allows them to feel each others' pain or pleasure form the basis for much of the film's juvenile humor.

The rest of *Sorceress* is taken up by a quest, as Mara and Mira travel with a very, very strange band of heroes—including a Viking, a handsome rogue (who is naturally a prince in disguise), and a satyr. The girls want revenge against the man who had their arms teacher slain. Can you guess who that might happen to be? Yup, Traigon. How convenient.

Some parts of *Sorceress* are goofy enough to be entertaining. The fight scenes border on the frenetic (though they are filmed quite badly). The heroes must fight the gorilla men of the Forbidden Forest who throw fruit that spouts laughing gas. And we even get two gods appearing in the finale. The dialogue can be pretty amusing, too, with lines like "So, be they women—or devil-cats?" and "Death is only death, swine!" Sheer poetry.

❑

Take A Byte

Where Computer Adventures Begin

by Erlene Mooney

1994 will see S.S.I. computer games anchored in the AD&D® game's RAVENLOFT® realm, DARK SUN® setting, and in the depths of the Underdark.

While the California-based computer game company is responsible for creating the AD&D games for IBMs and IBM-compatible computers, it is James Ward in Lake Geneva, WI, who decides what gets designed.

Ward, director of marketing for TSR, says he tries to match upcoming computer games with current game lines. Popular role playing games and settings are likely to have several computer adventures based on them.

For example, Ward says drow and Drizzt, the dark elf hero created by R.A. Salvatore, are very well-liked right now. Hence, S.S.I. will be developing a computer game set in the twisting chambers of Menzoberranzan.

"You probably won't get to play Drizzt," Ward said. "You'll probably play a stronger, faster, smarter brother."

The Menzoberranzan storyline must have Ward's approval before S.S.I. designers can develop the game. Ward makes sure the computer games are similar to the "paper" role playing products.

Ward believes adhering to an established campaign world's setting is crucial for the computer games. "The flavor of the world is everything," Ward said. S.S.I. went through a half-dozen storylines for an upcoming AL-QADIM™ computer game before they captured the correct atmosphere.

The RAVENLOFT computer game also hinges on mood and will have elements that role playing gamers will recognize.

"Everyone knows and everyone is interested in Strahd and his castle. So those things will be in the first computer game," Ward explained. "The Vistani are a big deal in the paper game. They'll be a big deal in the computer game."

Ward added that the first RAVENLOFT computer game "will lead you by the hand," teaching the basics to non-role-playing gamers and people unfamiliar with TSR's gothic-horror setting. It is essential the game also appeal to novices, since more than 20% of TSR-licensed computer games are sold to people unfamiliar with paper role playing games.

If the RAVENLOFT computer game is successful, there probably will be three different adventures released. Ward said S.S.I. is "thinking in trilogies." The DARK SUN setting might also be the basis for a computer game trilogy if the first game proves successful.

He added, "You're going to see a lot more FORGOTTEN REALMS® computer games. That's for sure. It's our biggest trademark." Among those will be an adventure set in Waterdeep.

There will also be a few D&D® game-based computer products aimed at people new to computer role playing games.

The computer games are good for the role playing hobby, he said. "People who used to play and stopped get interested again because of the computer games. It really renews their interest."

Producing A Computer Game

Ward says it takes about a month to establish a storyline for a computer adventure. Once design on the game starts, it takes another 11 months before the product is ready to be marketed.

Ward is involved in the process at all the levels. "I see all the outlines, all the storylines, the storyboards. I look at the screens and the art work, and I start playing the game."

The bulk of the games that will be produced will be for IBMs and IBM-compatibles. Ward says that's the largest market. While some games are made available for Macintosh users, they tend not to sell as well. Further, he says TSR is expanding into the CD game market through S.S.I. and the cartridge game market through Sega.

The games are getting increasingly sophisticated, Ward said, adding that this is one of the reasons why products come out late.

Often S.S.I. and other companies advertise that games will come out in a specific month, when they actually make it to the shelves many months later. He said it is difficult to take into account design problems that arise when programmers try to do increasingly difficult and spectacular things.

Computer gamers can see how the technology has changed by comparing "gold-boxed" TSR-licensed computer games that came out a few years ago, such as *Pool of Radiance*, with the recent release of *Eye of the Beholder III*.

"You grow into computer games through experience," Ward said. "Look at it this way, if you learn to drive a Model-T you have nothing to compare it to. It's a wonderful experience. If you learn to drive a Corvette, that's a wonderful experience. If all you have are a couple of gold-boxed games, until you see what's possible you don't know any better. But once you see something like *Eye of the Beholder*, you won't want to go back."

Cartridge Games

The first TSR-licensed Sega game, *Warriors of the Eternal Sun*, set in the D&D® game's Hollow World, was a great achievement, Ward said. In addition to being popular in the marketplace, it won an award as the best role playing computer game in the cartridge category.

Ward said cartridge games are more limited than computer games. While a computer game can show multiple views of a character and his equipment, a cartridge game likely can show only one view or pose because of the memory restrictions.

Still, he said, they are visual and exciting, and there will be more TSR-licensed cartridge games coming out, possibly based on the IBM computer games.

Speaking From Experience

Ward knows what he likes in TSR-licensed computer games because of the number of games he regularly plays. His experience helps make the AD&D computer games better.

Ward plays all of the TSR-based computer role playing games, including the ones released for Sega. One of his favorites is *Eye of the Beholder* and its sequels because the games are visual and filled with puzzles that are not too complex.

He also favors the Ultima Underworld game, Dune II, and Civilization, the latter of which he has spent hundreds of hours playing. Ward said he tends to stay away from computer war games because they take longer to play, are not as satisfying to watch, and get bogged down in combat detail. ❑

Conventions

AndCon '93, September 24-26
Independence, OH
Ohio's largest gaming convention will offer 23 original Network events, including Paragon, Grand Masters, Masters, the first ever interactive Living City adventure, and Living City magic shop. Other features include a special introduction to role playing event, C-in-C Microarmor's national championships, Puffing Billy, live action games, national PBM convention, computer gaming, and an auction. Special guests include Jean Rabe, Peter Bromley, Rick Loomis, Colin McComb, Tim Beach, and Slade Henson. Pre-registration is $17.95 for the weekend. For information contact: Andon Unlimited, AndCon '93 HQ, P.O. Box 3100, Kent, OH 44240 or call (216)673-2117 (in Ohio) or (800)529-EXPO (in the USA outside Ohio).

CONTACT XI, September 24-26
Evansville, IN
Joins us at the Ramada Inn, Highway 41 N in Evansville to relax, discuss science fiction and fantasy with other fans, play games, visit our dealer's room, art show, auction, hospitality suite, and video room. Our Fan Guest of Honor is Missouri Smith. Our Science Fiction Guest of Honor is Dr. Bill Breuer. For more information, write: CONTACT XI, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville, IN 47737 or call (812)463-3109.

Council of Five Nations 19, October 1-3
Schenectady, NY
This is one of the country's oldest gaming traditions. Our site is the Ramada Inn on Nott Street in Schenectady. The convention will offer many Network events, club challenges, open role playing, Star Fleet, L.A.R.P., miniatures, and board games. There also will be seminars, demonstrations, an auction, a dealers' area, miniatures painting and costume competitions, and a benefit breakfast to support the Farano Center for Children. A portion of all registration fees goes to our benefit fund. GMs, you are needed! For information write: Schenectady Wargamers Association—C.O.F.N. 19, P.O. Box 9429, Schenectady, NY 12309, or call Sandilyn Sherman at (518)664-9451; feel free to leave a message.

Nuke-Con III, October 9-10
Omaha, NE
Enjoy 32 hours of non-stop gaming! RPGs, board games, war games. and more. Features include: the auctioning of the original art from Champions Presents 2; interactive, multi-line computer fantasy role playing; and the third annual Battletech tournament. Admission is $5 a day, $8 for the weekend. Contact: Nuke-Con. P.O. Box 1561, Omaha, NE 68005; (402)733-5937.

COSCON '93, October 8-10
Beaver Falls, PA
The Circle of Swords Gaming Guild is sponsoring a convention at the Beaver Falls Holiday Inn, just off the Pennsylvania Turnpike, exit 2. We have first-run Network tournaments including Grand Masters, Masters, Decathlon, and Benefit, board games, miniatures (including a major multi-day event) and more. We also will have a large dealers' area, a miniatures painting contest, and new game demonstrations. Jean Rabe will be our Special Guest of Honor. For details, send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003, or call Dave Schnur at (412)283-1159.

Totally Tubular Con, October 15-17
Anaheim, CA
The Awesome Gamers Yacht Club invites role players to our convention. First-run Network tournaments include Living City, Masters, and Decathlon. Our site is the Jolly Roger Inn, Anaheim, across the street from Disneyland. For information write: Totally Tubular Con, P.O. Box 18791, Anaheim Hills, CA 92817-8791.

Fields of Honor II, October 16-17
Des Moines, IA
Join the Adventurers of Central Iowa and Hearts of Lead for Network and other role playing events, a wide variety of miniatures games, and board games. Plus auctions, sword tag, live action, contests, and prizes. For information write: Comics Plus, % Fields of Honor, 7015 Douglas Ave., Urbandale, IA 50322; (515)253-0907.

Rock Con, November 6-7
Rockford, IL
Enjoy many Network events including Star Wars benefit, AD&D® game Feature, Masters, Special, and Living City. Other events include the 1993 international Empire Builder tournament, board games, and miniatures. Admission is $5 for the weekend. For information write: Rock Con Game Fair, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton, IL 61072. Network GMs needed! Contact Rock Con Judge Appeal, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

Pocon '93, The Rematch, November 12-14
Bartonsville, PA
Come to the Bartonsville Holiday Inn for a DBA tournament, Network AD&D tournament, Champions, Hordes of the Things, historical miniatures, fantasy/SF miniatures, role playing, board games, painting contests, dealer area, and an auction. Contact Ed Dowgiallo, The Pocono Encampment, P.O. Box 390, Effort, PA 18330; (717)629-7218.

Hexacon, November 12-14
Greensboro, NC
Hexacon is sponsored by the Science Fiction/Fantasy Federation of UNC-Greensboro. Hexacon features role playing and strategy games, a Network Masters tournament, a dealers' room, and more. The site is the Holiday Inn Airport, 6426 Burnt Poplar Rd, Greensboro, NC. For information write: SF^3 % Sherrie Miller, Box 4 EUC, UNC-Greensboro, Greensboro, NC 27912; (919)334-3159. See ya there!

ShaunCon VII, November 19-21
Kansas City, MO
The RPG of KC presents this convention at the Howard Johnson, 601 Washington, Kansas City. First-run Network events include Grand Masters, Masters, AD&D games, GAMMA WORLD® game, RAVENLOFT® game, Champions, Shadowrun, Star Wars, Paranoia, Torg, and Star Trek. There will be a Decathlon event, the Midwest Regional tournament finale, and a Living City event. Our special guest is Tom Dowd. Board game events include Axis & Allies, and Advanced Civilization. Miniatures events include Warhammer 40K and Space Hulk. Dealer tables, a painting contest, and seminars round out the convention. For information write: Role Players Guild of Kansas City, % ShaunCon VII, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City, MO 64116; (816)455-5020.

This Just In

Tournament results for the following conventions were recorded at HQ between May 30th and July 15th 1993:

Club Meeting	Eclipse
Egyptian Campaign	Gamex
Glathricon	Kettering Game Fair
Knight March 1	Neovention
Okcommic Con	OpCon
Twin Con	

If you played a Network event at a convention not on this list, check with the convention organizer to see if the results have been sent to HQ.

Note that conventions run in **Europe** and **Australia** do not appear on this list.

Attention Living City Players

The following notice has been posted throughout Ravens Bluff:

Thieves beware! Serious criminal and civil penalties await all persons who violate the rules of property and equitable commerce. The city government will not tolerate the possession or trafficking of illicit goods in any form whatsoever. Any person having business within Ravens Bluff and its environs should be prepared to authenticate the provenance of all goods, chattels, and accouterments in his possession on pain of the aforementioned penalties.

Charles Oliver O'Kane, Lord Mayor
Tordon Sureblade, Lord Chancellor

Translation: HQ and various Living City fans have noticed a steady stream of characters who possess wealth and magical items which are simply unavailable to Living City characters. All characters who have such items will be summarily arrested and removed from play. If you have succumbed to the temptation to "enhance" your character, or if you know somebody who has, you can help the Network avoid a great deal of unpleasantness just by quietly seeing that offending items are removed from the character's sheet. Note that all items acquired at Chemcheaux come with a properly endorsed receipt. No Chemcheaux transaction is official without the receipt.

The Gaming Is Hot
At WINTER FANTASY™

Mark your calendars now – January 7th, 8th, and 9th 1994
Join us for three action-packed days of gaming excitement at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Milwaukee, WI.

Role playing sessions, Network tournaments, board game challenges, seminars, and war game events are just some of the activities that await.
Our guests of honor this year are noted game designers Bruce Nesmith and Bill Slavicsek and best-selling author James Lowder.
Don't be left out in the cold. Make plans now to attend Wisconsin's *other* gaming convention.

For a registration form write to:
RPGA® Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI. 53147

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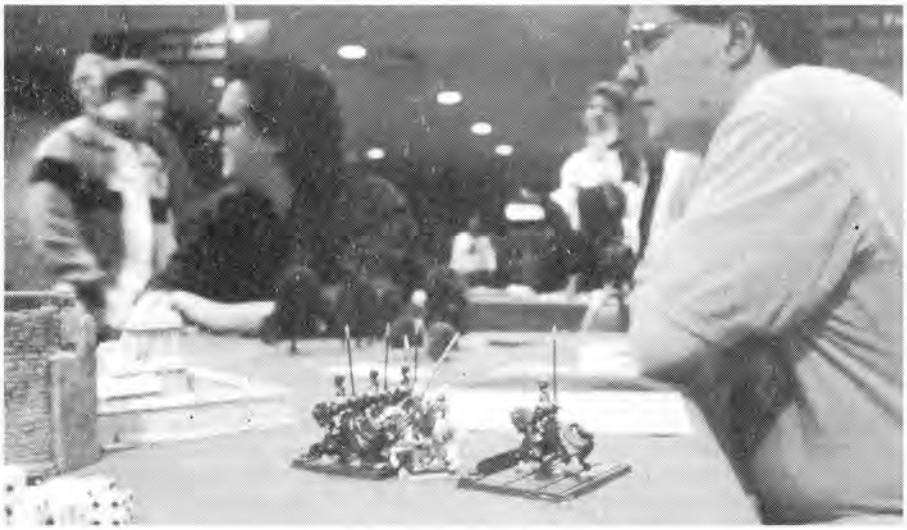
The Roving Eye